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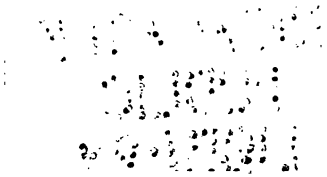

TO

THE REV. EDWARD CRAVEN HAWTREY, D.D.

HEAD MASTER OF ETON COLLEGE,

AS A SMALL TOKEN OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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very. From that time to the present, Romanist writers have been suffered to claim identity in discipline and doctrine with the church that occupied the catacombs; while an attempt has scarcely been made to show from these remains the more striking resemblance existing between our Reformed Church and that of primitive Rome.

It is difficult now to realise the impression which must have been made upon the first explorers of this subterranean city. A vast necropolis, rich in the bones of saints and martyrs; a stupendous testimony to the truth of Christian history, and, consequently, to that of Christianity itself; a faithful record of the trials of a persecuted Church;—such were the objects presented to their view; and so great was the enthusiasm with which they devoted themselves to the research, that two of the earliest writers on the Catacombs of Rome, Bosio and Boldetti, occupied thirty years each in collecting materials for their respective works, which in both instances remained to be edited by their survivors.

We must now have recourse to the museums of Rome, and the works of antiquarians, in order to understand the arrangement of the Catacombs at the time of their use as cemeteries. From the removal of every thing portable to a place of greater security and more easy access, as well as from the difficulty of personally examining these dangerous galleries, beyond the mere entrance left open to general inspection, we are no longer able to share

the feelings of those who beheld the cemeteries and chapels of a past age, completely furnished with their proper contents.

St. Jerome has left us a lively picture of their state during the early part of his lifetime, that is, about the middle of the fourth century. "When I was at Rome," says the monk of Palestine, "still a youth, and employed in literary pursuits, I was accustomed, in company with others of my own age, and actuated by the same feelings, to visit on Sundays the sepulchres of the apostles and martyrs; and often to go down into the crypts dug in the heart of the earth, where the walls on either side are lined with the dead; and so intense is the darkness, that we almost realise the words of the prophet, 'They go down alive into hell' (or Hades), and here and there a scanty aperture, ill deserving the name of window, admits scarcely light enough to mitigate the gloom which reigns below: and as we advance through the shades with cautious steps, we are forcibly reminded of the words of Virgil, 'Horror on all sides; even the silence terrifies the mind.'"*

The history of the catacombs, since their recovery from the oblivion in which they had remained during the dark ages, consists principally in a succession of controversies, provoked by the indiscriminate veneration paid to every object found in them. During the reign of Sixtus the Fifth, who

* Hieronymus in Ezechiel, c. xl.

ascended the pontifical throne in 1585, some discussions having occurred respecting relics, the attention of antiquarians was strongly directed to the subject, and a diligent examination of the catacombs, then recently discovered, was undertaken. Foremost in this investigation was Bosio, whose posthumous works were edited by Severano, in the year 1632, under the title of *Roma Sotterranea*, including an original chapter by the editor. The same work translated into Latin, and still further enlarged, was republished by Arringhi.

A number of epitaphs were published by Fabretti, who was invested with the office of Curator of the Catacombs, and eighteen years afterwards another folio issued from the hands of his successor, Boldetti, intitled "Osservazioni sopra i cimiterii dei Santi Martiri." This work abounds in theological and antiquarian information, while the next that appeared, the "*Sculture e Pitture*" of Bottari, was devoted more especially to the Christian arts. The subject now became exhausted, not from the completeness of the knowledge obtained, but from the condition of the catacombs themselves, which by that time had been robbed of their contents to adorn the museums of the learned.

But another line of research, not less interesting, was still prosecuted with continued success. The extensive stores of information relating to early church history, were now brought to bear upon the surviving monuments of ancient times: and an increased knowledge of pagan manners allowed a finer

distinction to be drawn between what was purely Christian, and what was merely adopted from Gentilism: the result has become apparent, in the disappearance of the angry controversial spirit which marked the discussions of the two last centuries. The Roman antiquarians, better informed in the history of their city, and less alarmed by bold attempts to deprive their martyrs and saints of the honours to which they had been thought entitled, no longer felt a pious horror at those who would have "taken away their gods:" while Protestant travellers, perhaps softened by the concessions of their adversaries, began in a more catholic spirit to honour the ground consecrated by the death or burial of those who had died for the common faith: so that the subject of debate is now not so much the Christianity or Heathenism of monuments and customs, as the age to which they belonged. Caution is still requisite, in order to steer a safe course between the superstitious credulity of the Romanist, who would see a saint or a martyr in every skeleton, and consecrate every cemetery by a miracle; and the scepticism of another school, who, under the mask of candid inquiry, would reject all evidence short of absolute demonstration, in favour of the sufferings and acts of the primitive believers.

The principal controversy concerning the Christian cemeteries arose from the zeal of two travellers, Burnet and Misson, who wished to prove that there was no real distinction between the burial-places of Pagans and Christians at the time referred

to. The arguments of Burnet are ingenious, but founded upon data so incorrect and imperfect that they are entirely without weight. He reasons, that the Christians, never averaging above forty-five thousand at one time in Rome, were quite inadequate to the execution of such works: that they would have been observed and molested by their enemies: and that the catacombs themselves would have been insupportable as a residence, from the putrefying bodies contained in them. That the Pagans buried as well as burned their dead: that the Christian cemeteries contain no dates older than the fourth and fifth centuries: in short, that a few monks, finding the trade in relics growing profitable, forged some tens of thousands of marble inscriptions, placed them in Pagan cemeteries below ground, and being driven away by persecution, were forced to abandon these fictitious monuments, which remained undiscovered till after the dark ages.*

Happily, a remarkable agreement on this point prevails among all modern writers; and while it is stedfastly maintained by them that the Christian cemeteries are free from all admixture of Pagan bodies, it is allowed that the excavation of the catacombs was not begun by the Christians, but that they appropriated to their own use the subterranean galleries, originally dug to provide the materials for building Rome. The complete occu-

* Letters from Switzerland, Italy, &c.

pation of them by Christian sepulchres, the absence of Pagan monuments, and the entire concurrence of all the contemporary writers on the subject, speak so decisively in favour of their exclusively Christian character, that it is difficult to imagine how any further evidence could be adduced concerning a question never agitated till the seventeenth century. The testimony of Prudentius, a writer of the fourth century, is of great weight: he alludes to the catacombs continually, without seeming to conceive the possibility of their having been defiled by a single Pagan corpse.

The chief sources of information regarding the catacombs, lie in the various collections of inscriptions in and near Rome. A few interesting Christian epitaphs are to be found on the walls of the Capitoline Museum, in the entrance to the catacombs of St. Sebastian, and in some private houses and villas. But all these collections are insignificant, when compared with the treasures of the Vatican, of which a short description must be given, as frequent reference will be made to them throughout this volume. First, there is the Christian Museum properly so called, containing a number of sarcophagi, bas-reliefs, inscriptions, and medals, most of them published in the works of Roman antiquarians. Through the kindness of a friend, the author was allowed to copy some of the epitaphs lately added. Besides this, at the entrance to the Vatican Museum is a long corridor, the sides of which are completely lined with inscriptions

plastered into the wall. On the right hand are arranged the epitaphs of Pagans, votive tablets, dedications of altars, fragments of edicts and public documents, collected from the neighbourhood of the city; and opposite to them, classed under the heads of Greek, Latin, and Consular monuments, appear the inscriptions of the ancient Christians. These have been collected indiscriminately from the catacombs round Rome, and have hitherto remained unpublished.* To this gallery, from the circumstance of its containing little more than sepulchral stones, the name of Lapidarian, or *delle Lapidi*, has been given. The inscriptions, amounting to more than three thousand, were arranged in their present order by Gaetano Marini.

Notwithstanding the indifference manifested by

* In the year 1841, the writer applied for permission "to copy some of the inscriptions contained in the Lapidarian Gallery," and a licence "to make some memoranda in drawing in that part of the Museum" was granted. About that time, a misunderstanding is reported to have arisen between the Jesuits and the officers of the Vatican; in consequence of which the former were refused permission to copy the inscriptions in question for their forthcoming work on the Christian Arts. An application was also made by them to the Custode of the Gallery, in order to prevent the use of its contents by a Protestant. On the last day of the month for which the author's licence was available, he was officially informed that his permission did not extend to the inscriptions, but only to a few blocks of sculpture scattered up and down the Gallery. This communication was accompanied by a demand that the copies already made should be given up, which was refused; and with the understanding that no more inscriptions should be copied, and that they should not be published *in Rome*, the matter was allowed to drop.

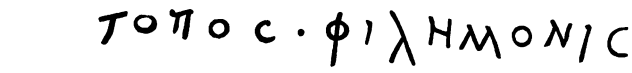
the hundreds of visitors who daily traverse this corridor, there needs but a little attention to invest its walls with a degree of interest scarcely to be exceeded by any other remains of past ages. "I have spent," says Raoul Rochette, "many entire days in this sanctuary of antiquity, where the sacred and profane stand facing each other, in the written monuments preserved to us, as in the days when Paganism and Christianity, striving with all their powers, were engaged in mortal conflict. * * * * * And were it only the treasure of impressions which we receive from this immense collection of Christian epitaphs, taken from the graves of the catacombs, and now attached to the walls of the Vatican, this alone would be an inexhaustible fund of recollections and enjoyment for a whole life." *

The Consular Monuments, principally comprised in a compartment at the further end of the corridor, are those containing the names of the consuls who governed during the years in which they were erected. Their value as chronological data is obvious; and their authenticity is the more to be relied upon, from their rude execution and imperfect orthography, often leaving us in doubt as to the very names of the consuls intended to be expressed. It would appear that the better class of Christians, especially those of the third and fourth centuries, were more in the habit of adding dates

* Tableau des Catacombes, p. x.

to their epitaphs, than those of lower condition, or an earlier period.

On the walls thus loaded with inscriptions belonging to professors of the rival religions, we may trace a contrast between the state of Pagan and that of Christian society in the ancient metropolis. The funereal lamentation, expressed in neatly engraved hexameters, the tersely worded sentiments of stoicism, and the proud titles of Roman citizenship, attest the security and resources of the old religion. Further on, the whole heaven of Paganism is glorified by innumerable altars, where the epithets, unconquered, greatest, and best, are lavished upon the worthless shadows that peopled Olympus. Here and there are traces of complicated political orders; tablets containing the names of individuals composing a legion or cohort; legal documents relating to property, and whatever belongs to a state, such as the Roman empire in its best times is known to have been. The first glance at the opposite wall is enough to show, that, as St. Paul himself expressed it, "not many mighty, not many noble," were numbered among those whose epitaphs are there displayed: some few indeed are scarcely to be distinguished from those of the Pagans opposite, but the greater part betray by their execution, haste and ignorance. An incoherent sentence, or a straggling mis-spelt scrawl, such as



"The place of Philemon," inscribed upon a rough slab destined to close a niche in caverns where daylight could never penetrate, tells of a persecuted, or at least, oppressed community. There is also a simplicity in many of these slight records not without its charm; as in the annexed,

BIRGINIVS PARVM
STETIT AP. N.

"Virginius remained but a short time with us."

The slabs of stone used for closing Christian graves average from one to three feet in length. In this they differ remarkably from the sepulchral tablets of the Pagans, who, being accustomed to burn their dead, required a much smaller covering for the cinerary urn. The letters on Christian monuments are from half an inch to four inches in height, and coloured in the incision with a pigment resembling Venetian red. Whether this pigment originally belonged to all the letters, is uncertain: many are now found without it. The custom of cutting in the stone is alluded to by Prudentius in his hymn in honour of the eighteen Martyrs of Saragossa; in which he calls upon his fellow Christians to wash with pious tears, the furrows in the marble tablets erected to them.

"Nos pio fletu, date, perluamus
Marmorum sulcos—"

The orthography of these epitaphs is generally faulty, the letters irregular, and the sense not

always obvious. These characteristics the author has been anxious to preserve, and has therefore spared no pains in executing copies in exact facsimile, though much reduced in size.

Another difference between the inscriptions belonging to the Pagans and Christians of the early centuries, is too remarkable to be passed by unnoticed. While the heathen name consisted of several essential parts, all of which were necessary to distinguish its owner, the Christians in general confined themselves to that which they had received in baptism. Thus the names of Felix, Sevus, Philemon, and Agape, are found on tombs, unaccompanied by any of the other designations which belonged to those individuals as members of a Roman family. Occasionally we meet with two, and perhaps even three names on their monuments, as Aurelia Agapetilla, Largia Agape; but these are not common. The first believers, when not forced, by the multiplicity of persons christened alike, to add a further distinction, appear to have regarded their Christian name as the only one worthy of preservation on their sepulchres.

The merely classical student, unless in search of the vernacular language of ancient Rome, will find little in these inscriptions to repay the trouble of perusing them. A few obsolete and barbarous expressions, the gradual origin of the cursive character, and the uncertain pronunciation of some consonants, indicated by the varied modes of writing the same word, are not the most interesting points

of investigation suggested by these monuments. Better purposes are served by their examination, inasmuch as they express the feelings of a body of Christians, whose leaders alone are known to us in history. The Fathers of the Church live in their voluminous works; the lower orders are only represented by these simple records, from which, with scarcely an exception, sorrow and complaint are banished; the boast of suffering, or an appeal to the revengeful passions, is nowhere to be found. One expresses faith, another hope, a third charity. The genius of primitive Christianity, "To believe, to love, and to suffer," has never been better illustrated. These "sermons in stones" are addressed to the heart, and not to the head—to the feelings rather than to the taste; and possess additional value from being the work of the purest and most influential portion of the "catholic and apostolic Church" then in existence.

The student of Christian archæology must never lose sight of the distinction between the actual relics of a persecuted Church and the subsequent labours of a superstitious age. When Christianity, on the cessation of its troubles, emerged from those recesses, and walked boldly on the soil beneath which it had been glad to seek concealment, the humble cradle of its infancy became a principal object of veneration, almost of worship. To decorate the chapels, adorn by monuments the labyrinths of sepulchres, and pay an excessive regard to all that belonged to martyrs and martyrdom, was the constant labour

of succeeding centuries. Hence arises a chronological confusion, which calls for caution in deciding upon the value of any inference that may be drawn from these sources, respecting points of doctrine. Yet it may not be amiss to premise generally, that in the inscriptions contained in the Lapidarian Gallery, selected and arranged under Papal superintendance, there are no prayers for the dead (unless the forms, "May you live," "May God refresh you," be so construed); no addresses to the Virgin Mary, nor to the Apostles or earlier Saints; and, with the exception of "eternal sleep," "eternal home," &c., no expressions contrary to the plain sense of Scripture.* And if the bones of the martyrs were more honoured, and the privilege of being interred near them more valued, than the simplicity of our religion would warrant, there is, in this outbreak of enthusiastic feeling towards the heroic defenders of the faith, no precedent for the adoration paid to them by a corrupt age.

Perhaps it may safely be asserted, that the ancient Church appears in the Lapidarian Gallery in a somewhat more favourable light than in the writings of the fathers and historians. It may be that the sepulchral tablet is more congenial to the display of pious feeling than the controversial epistle, or even the much-needed episcopal rebuke. Besides the gentle and amiable spirit every where breathed, the distinctive character of these remains is essentially

* There is in this collection one epitaph containing the phrase *Ora pro nobis*, "pray for us."

Christian: the name of Christ is repeated in an endless variety of forms, and the actions of His life are figured in every degree of rudeness of execution. The second Person of the Trinity is neither viewed in the Jewish light of a temporal Messiah, nor degraded to the Socinian estimate of a mere example, but is invested with all the honours of a Redeemer. On this subject there is no reserve, no heathenish suppression of the distinguishing feature of our religion: on stones innumerable appears the Good Shepherd, bearing on his shoulders the recovered sheep, by which many an illiterate believer expressed his sense of personal salvation. One, according to his epitaph, "sleeps in Christ;" another is buried with a prayer that "she may live in the Lord Jesus." But most of all, the cross in its simplest form is employed to testify the faith of the deceased: and whatever ignorance may have prevailed regarding the letter of Holy Writ, or the more mysterious doctrines contained in it, there seems to have been no want of apprehension of that sacrifice, "whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of Heaven."

CHAPTER II.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CATACOMBS.

THE great increase which took place in the extent and magnificence of ancient Rome, during the latter times of the republic, led to the formation of quarries in the immediate neighbourhood, from which were obtained the materials necessary for building. In this respect, the city of the Cæsars resembles many others, of which it is sufficient to name Paris, Naples, Syracuse, and Alexandria, all more or less surrounded or undermined by long tortuous excavations. Their size and shape differ according to the firmness of the substratum: those of Naples being large and lofty; while those round Rome, from the crumbling nature of the soil, are narrow and low. Several of these *catacombs*, as they are called, are represented in the work of D'Agincourt*, where it is easy to trace a connection between the solidity of the ground and the regularity of the galleries. The materials quarried in the Campagna of Rome consisted of tufa and puzzolana, a volcanic sandy rock, which from its texture was well adapted to the excavation of long galleries. It is affirmed by D'Agin-

* Histoire de l'Art, vol. iv. pl. ix.

court, that they follow the direction of the veins of puzzolana; but on this point it is difficult to decide.

These subterranean works first attracted general notice during the time of Augustus, when their extent rendered them dangerous. They then obtained celebrity as the scene of a domestic tragedy referred to by Cicero in his oration for Cluentius. The riches of Asinius, a young Roman citizen, had excited the avarice of Oppianicus, who employed an accomplice to personate Asinius, and to execute a will in his name. The pretended Asinius having bequeathed the property to Oppianicus, and obtained the signatures of some strangers, the true Asinius was inveigled to the gardens of the Esquiline, and precipitated into one of the sandpits (in arenarias quasdam extra Portam Esquilinam). It was in similar caverns that Nero was afterwards advised to conceal himself, when terrified by the sentence of an enraged senate: on which occasion he made answer to his freedman Phaon, that he would not go under ground while living. The circumstance is related by Suetonius.

The sand obtained from the Esquiline pits was much used for making cement: it was recommended for this purpose by Vitruvius as preferable to all other.

The custom of digging sand from these crypts or galleries being established, the whole subsoil on one side of Rome was in course of time perforated by a network of excavations, spreading ultimately

to a distance of fifteen miles. But while this was taking place, the original quarries, exhausted of their stores, were appropriated to other uses. We must bear in mind that at this time, that is, about the close of the republic, the Romans were accustomed to burn their dead, excepting a few families of distinction, who preferred burying them, and the lowest orders of the people, who were not able to procure the honours of a funeral pile. Certain classes of persons, as those who had made away with themselves, or perished by the hand of the law, were forbidden to receive the rites of cremation. The prohibition was also extended to such as had been struck by lightning: a circumstance seized upon by Tertullian, as illustrative of the Christian's salvation from hell: "He who has been touched by heavenly fire is safe from being consumed by any other flame."

For these persons the pits left by the sand diggers on the Esquiline hill afforded a convenient burial place; and their bodies were thrown in to putrefy, much to the annoyance of the inhabitants of that part of Rome. The *puticulæ*, *puticuli*, or *culinæ*, as these pits were called, took their name either from their resemblance to a well, in Latin *puteus*, or from the verb *putesco*, to putrefy. Both derivations are supported by Festus, a grammarian of the sixth century: whereas Varro, who lived nearer the time, having served as a lieutenant under Pompey, mentions only the verb, and limits the designation *puticulæ* to the pits without the

Esquiline gate. *Culinæ* is said to be a further diminutive of *puticulinæ*, a supposition which perfectly accords with the idiom of modern Italian.

The Esquiline hill, infested by banditti, and rendered almost impassable by the pestilential atmosphere generated in the common receptacles for the dead, was suffered to remain in that loathsome condition until it was reclaimed by Mæcenas, and converted into gardens. This fact, of great importance to our history, is alluded to by Horace, who compliments his patron upon the benefit thus conferred on the public. The scarecrow deity set up in the garden is represented as congratulating himself upon the change: "A reed stuck upon the top of my head keeps off the troublesome birds, and prevents them from settling in the newly made gardens. Before, the cast-out bodies of slaves were brought here by their fellow-servants, to be deposited in ill-made coffins, in narrow cells. This place was a common sepulchre for the dregs of the people; for the buffoon Pantolabus, and the spendthrift Nomentanus. . . . . Now, it is possible to live on the wholesome Esquiline, and bask on its sunny banks: where lately the ground covered with whitening bones was enough to produce melancholy."* The scholiast commenting upon this passage remarks, "Here were formerly brought the bodies (cadavera) of plebeians or of slaves, for there were then public sepulchres existing there."†

* Horatii Serm. i. 8.

† Acron ad Horatium in loco.

From these quotations it appears that the place of burial was *common*, that is, not appropriated to a family or tribe, the only community of sepulture known to the Romans in general; and also that the unburnt bodies, not their ashes, were thrown into those receptacles. According to Raoul Rochette*, who has paid particular attention to this subject, there were in other parts of Rome similar places reserved for the common burial of the lower orders. The term *puticulæ*, however, according to Varro, seems to have been confined to the caves outside the Esquiline gate. (See also Facciolati, *sub voce* Puticuli.)

When it is asserted by some that the pits in the garden of Mæcenas are no other than a part of the catacombs occupied by the Christians in common with the Pagans, the statement is made in defiance of all probability. The death of Mæcenas preceded the introduction of Christianity into Rome, so that none but heathen could have been buried on the ground enclosed by him: and no signs of Christian occupation occur anywhere near the spot. It needs but the most cursory examination of the Christian catacombs, as well as of the Pagan sepulchres, to prove that both classes of Romans carefully preserved a separation between their respective dead. Cyprian accuses Martialis of burying his sons in profane sepulchres, and thus exposing them to the contact of heathen bodies.†

* Tableau des Catacombes, p. 28.

† Ep. 67.

Besides the persons forced by poverty or by law to bury their dead unburnt, the higher ranks gradually adopted the same custom. We are told by historians that the Cornelia family, followed by a few others, introduced the practice, and the tomb of the Scipios (a branch of that family) confirms their report. This mausoleum is contained in an excavated gallery, in a vineyard on the Appian way, within the gate of St. Sebastian. Over the entrance is inscribed *Sepulchra Scipionum*, and on sarcophagi formerly found within, but now deposited in the Vatican Museum, are the names of individuals belonging to that house. In the *Columbarium*, or common tomb of the freedmen of Livia, according to Gori, sarcophagi for unburnt bodies are found together with urns containing ashes. The same is seen in the tomb of the Aruntii, described by Piranesi. (Raoul Rochette.)

In confirmation of the simultaneous existence of both customs may be cited the following heathen inscription, in which the expression, *the entire body*, not only shows it to have been unburnt, but proves this instance to be an exception to the general practice.

D. M.
L. JVLI. EPIGONI.
VIXIT. ANNIS. XXVI. M. V. D. XII.
CORPVS. INTEGRVM CONDITVM
L. JVLIVS. GAMVS
PATER. FILIO. PIISIMO

To the Divine Manes.
Here is preserved the entire body of
Lucius Julius Epigonus.
L. J. Gamus dedicates this to
His most dutiful Son.

The Christians of the second and third centuries, though still employing the heathen appellation *arenariæ*, had other means of designating the Catacombs. Cyprian calls them cemeteries; besides which, the term *new crypts* (cryptæ novæ) was applied to subsequent additions made by Christian hands.

From various reasons, the caves near the present Basilica of St. Sebastian are considered by antiquarians as having been the first occupied by the Christians. To these in particular were applied the expressions *ad arenas*, *cryptæ arenariæ*, and *cryptæ*, to which the Christians added the Greek form *ad catacumbas*. The term Catacombs, therefore, signified originally the pits about that part of the Appian way; and we find the phrases *in catecumpas*, of the seventh century, and *juxta catacumbas* of the thirteenth, limited to a space extending from the church of St. Sebastian to the circus of Romulus, and the tomb of Cecilia Metella.* Anastasius, in the Liber Pontificalis, must have used the words *n cemeterio catacumbarum* to designate this particular spot, as some manuscripts read *in ceme-*

* See Roestell's learned article in the Chevalier Bunsen's Roms Beschreibung, vol. i. p. 374.

terio Callisti. Lastly, the phrase, *locus qui dicitur catacumbas* is used by Gregory, in the thirtieth epistle of the fourth book, as indicating a spot two miles distant from Rome, that is, the Sebastian catacombs. To sum up the history of the word, which though of Greek form claims no early origin, it is nowhere found in inscriptions belonging to the ancient cemeteries, nor does it occur in history before the time of Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, from which to the thirteenth, it generally signified a part of the country near Rome. Still later it was applied, in a limited sense, to a chapel underneath the Basilica of St. Sebastian, as observed by Raoul Rochette; and in our own times it has become a generic term for all subterranean passages of a certain length and tortuosity, whether they lie beneath the pyramids of the desert, or undermine the site of a modern metropolis.

In the great work of D'Agincourt, "The History of Art, drawn from its Monuments," is the description of a subterranean labyrinth in France, which strongly resembles the Roman catacombs. The inhabitants of Quesnel, driven from their homes by an invasion of the Normans, sought refuge in the quarries from which the materials of their houses had been extracted. Finding the caves narrow and incommodious, they enlarged them to the width and height of ten or twelve feet, and vaulted them above like an oven. Here they concealed themselves, their furniture, and their cattle; and even

at the present time these retreats serve for the meetings of the young people of the district, who work together there during the winter evenings.

It being proved by historical evidence that the catacombs were originally dug by the Pagans as sand-pits and quarries, it remains to be shown in what manner the Christians became connected with them. The *arenarii* or sand-diggers were persons of the lowest grade, and from the nature of their occupation probably formed a distinct class. There is reason to suppose that Christianity spread very early among them, for in time of persecution, the converts employed in the subterranean passages not only took refuge there themselves, but also put the whole Church in possession of these otherwise inaccessible retreats. When we reflect upon the trials which awaited the Church, and the combined powers of earth and hell which menaced its earliest years, it is impossible not to recognise the fostering care of a heavenly Hand, in thus providing a cradle for the infant community. Perhaps to the protection afforded by the Catacombs, as an impregnable fortress from which persecution always failed to dislodge it, the Church in Rome owed much of the rapidity of its triumph; and to the preservation of its earliest sanctuaries, its ancient superiority in discipline and manners. The customs of the first ages, stamped indelibly on the walls of the Catacombs, must have contributed to check the spirit of innovation soon observable throughout Christendom: the elements of a pure faith were written

" with an iron pen, in the rock, for ever;" and if the Church of after-times had looked back to her subterranean home, " to the hole of the pit whence she was digged," she would there have sought in vain for traces of forced celibacy, the invocation of saints, and the representation of Deity in painting or sculpture. Whatever dates may be attributed to other remains, this fact is certain, that the Lapidarian Gallery, arranged by the hands of the modern Romanists, contains no support whatever for the dogmas of the Council of Trent. Resting upon this distinction, virtually drawn by themselves, between what belongs to a pure age, and what to the times of innovation, we may safely refer to the latter a number of inscriptions of doubtful date, preserved in the vaults of St. Peter's, which contain prayers to the Virgin Mary, and other peculiarities of Romanist theology. The history of Christendom as well as that of Art supplies the means of fixing the age of many such monuments: for instance, the time of Vigilantius, when some bishops, moved by his arguments, refused to ordain unmarried deacons, cannot be confounded with an age in which the celibacy of the clergy became compulsory: nor can we easily mistake for the work of a century that knew only the sign of the cross in its simplest form of two straight lines, the wretched representation of the Passion, in a crucifix the size of life, smeared with the imitation of blood, and surmounted by a crown of actual thorns. Yet it must be confessed that the gradual and unequal progress of declension

occasionally leaves us in difficulties: for in the very case referred to, the bishops who, by their support of matrimony among the clergy, drew down upon themselves the indignation of Jerome, were not altogether in unison with the spirit of their time: they were, as Milman and Middleton express it, *premature protestants.* It is such instances of resistance to an innovating age, that seem to prolong the era of simplicity in the Church: as in the natural world we sometimes cherish the belief that summer is still amongst us, because "latest roses linger," regardless of the too faithful index of an autumnal sky.

It appears from a number of testimonies, not perhaps of any great value individually, though of some weight when combined, that the early confessors were at times sentenced to work in the sand-pits. This species of punishment is referred to in many Acts of the Martyrs, and especially in those of Marcellus, where we are told that the Emperor Maximian "condemned all the Roman soldiers who were Christians to hard labour; and in various places set them to work, some to dig stones, others sand." He also ordered Ciriacus and Sisinnus to be strictly guarded, condemning them to dig sand, and to carry it on their shoulders. Marius and his companions were sentenced to the same employment. There is also a tradition in Rome that the baths of Diocletian were built from the materials procured by the Christians. That the Catacombs were throughout well known to

them is evident; for every part was completely taken possession of by them, and furnished with tombs or chapels: paintings and inscriptions belonging to our religion are to be seen every where; and for three hundred years the entire Christian population of Rome found sepulture in those recesses.

The fact that the Catacombs were employed as a refuge from persecution rests upon good evidence, notwithstanding objections that have been made, founded upon the narrowness of the passages, the difficulty of supporting life, and the risk of discovery incurred by seeking concealment in an asylum so well known to their enemies. These objections scarcely apply to a temporary residence below ground in times of danger; and it is not pretended that the Catacombs were inhabited under other circumstances. In the excavations at Quesnel, not only persons, but cattle, contrived to support existence: added to which we have, as will be seen presently, the direct testimony of several writers. Had the intricacies of the Catacombs been well known to the heathen authorities, or the entrances limited in number to two or three, they would doubtless have afforded an insecure asylum. But the entrances were numberless, scattered over the Campagna for miles; and the labyrinth below so occupied by the Christians, and so blocked up in various places by them, that pursuit must have been almost useless. The Acts of the Martyrs relate some attempts made to overwhelm

the galleries with mounds of earth, in order to destroy those who were concealed within: but setting aside these legends, we are credibly informed that not only did the Christians take refuge there, but that they were also occasionally overtaken by their pursuers. The Catacombs have become illustrious by the actual martyrdom of some noble witnesses to the truth. Xystus, Bishop of Rome, together with Quartus, one of his clergy, suffered below ground in the time of Cyprian. Stephen the First, another Bishop of Rome, was traced by heathen soldiers to his subterranean chapel: on the conclusion of divine service, he was thrust back into his episcopal chair, and beheaded. The letters of Christians then living refer to such scenes with a simplicity that dispels all idea of exaggeration; while their expectation of sharing the same fate affords a vivid picture of those dreadful times.

An authentic history of Stephen during his long residence in the Catacombs, would be surpassed in interest by few narratives in the ecclesiastical archives. A few incidents have been handed down to us.* From time to time he was consulted by his clergy, who resorted to him for advice and exhortation. On one occasion, a layman named Hippolytus, himself a refugee, sought the Bishop's cell to receive instruction regarding a circumstance that preyed upon his mind. Paulina, his heathen

* This story, with several others, will be found in Rock's Heirurgia.

sister, together with her husband Adrian, were in the habit of sending provisions by their two children to Hippolytus and his companions. The unconverted state of these relations, by whom his bodily life was supported, weighed heavily upon him, and by the advice of Stephen a plan was laid for detaining the children, so that the parents were forced to seek them in the cavern. Every argument was used by Stephen and Hippolytus to induce their benefactors to embrace the faith, and though for the time ineffectual, the desired end was at length accomplished. Tradition adds that they all suffered martyrdom, and were buried in the Catacombs.

In the time of Diocletian, the Christian Caius is said to have lived eight years in the Catacombs, and to have terminated this long period of *confession* by undergoing martyrdom. Even as late as the year 352, Liberius, Bishop of Rome, took up his abode in the cemetery of St. Agnes during the Arian persecution.

The discovery of wells and springs in various parts of the corridors assists us in understanding how life could be supported in those dismal regions: although there is no evidence to prove that the wells were sunk for that purpose. One of them has been named the Font of St. Peter, and however apocryphal may be the tradition which refers it to apostolic times, the fact of its having been long used for baptism is not to be disputed. Some of the wells are supposed to have been dug with the intention of draining parts of the Catacombs.

St. Chrysostom, who lived not long after the days of persecution, alludes to the concealment of a lady of rank below ground. In an indignant remonstrance against the festivities held over the graves of martyrs in his dissipated city, he compares with the luxurious revels into which the Agapæ had degenerated, the actual condition of those whose sufferings were celebrated in so unbefitting a manner. "What connection," he asks, "is there between your feasts, and the hardships of a lady unaccustomed to privation, trembling in a vault, apprehensive of the capture of her maid, upon whom she depends for her daily food?"

These circumstances prove sufficiently the general habit of taking refuge in the cemeteries on any sudden emergency; and it is not difficult to understand how the concealment became practicable. On the outbreak of a persecution, the elders of the Church, heads of families, and others particularly obnoxious to the Pagans, would be the first to suffer; perhaps the only individuals whose death or exile was intended by the imperial officers. Aware of their danger, and probably well versed in the signs of impending persecution, they might easily betake themselves to the Catacombs, where they could be supported by those whose obscure condition left them at liberty.

The importance of the Catacombs as a retreat was not unknown to the heathen: every effort was made at the beginning of a persecution to prevent the Christians from escaping by a subterranean

flight: and several edicts begin with a prohibition against entering the cemeteries. Valerian and Gallienus decreed death as the punishment of disobedience; a sentence which was carried into execution in the case of Cyprian. (Procons. Acts.)

The limitation applied to a residence in the Catacombs must be extended in nearly an equal degree to the custom of worshipping in them. It is a well-known fact, that before the time of Constantine there were in Rome many rooms or halls employed for divine worship, though perhaps no edifices built expressly for that purpose. Besides this, the extreme smallness of the catacomb chapels, and their distance from the usual dwellings of the Christians, oppose serious objections to the supposition that they served for regular meetings. Yet nothing is better attested in history than the fact that, throughout the fourth century, the Church met there for the celebration of the eucharist, for prayer at the graves of the martyrs, and for the love feasts or Agapæ. Prudentius* affirms that he had often prayed before the tomb of Hippolytus, and describes at length the subterranean sepulchre of that saint. After narrating the care of the Church shown in gathering the mangled remains of the martyr, he proceeds to a minute description of the catacomb in which they were deposited: — "Among the cultivated grounds, not far outside the walls, lies a deep cavern with dark

* Peristephanon, hymn iv.

recesses. A descending path, with winding steps, leads through the dim turnings; and the daylight entering by the mouth of the cavern, somewhat illumines the first part of the way. But the darkness grows deeper as we advance, till we meet with openings cut in the roof of the passages, admitting light from above . . . . there have I often prayed prostrate, sick with the corruptions of soul and body, and obtained relief." The discovery of chapels, altars, episcopal chairs, and fonts, indicates the existence of a subterranean worship at some time or other: but it is difficult to prove that all the religious ceremonies were performed in the Catacombs at a very early period. The following inscription, which was found over one of the graves in the cemetery of Callistus, shows that prayers were offered below ground. The monument is probably of somewhat later date than the death of the martyr to whose memory it is raised; but being affixed to his actual tomb, bears strong marks of authenticity. The author of this volume has ventured to render the concluding letters, IV. X. TEM. by " in Christianis tempoRibus."

ALEXANDER MORTVVS NON EST SED VIVIT SVPER ASTRA ET CORPVS IN HOC TVMVLO QVIESCIT VITAM EXPLEVIT SVB ANTONINO IMP° QVIVBI MVLTVM BENE FITII ANTEVENIRE PRAEVIDERET PRO GRATIA ODIVM REDDIDIT

GENVA ENIM FLECTENS VERO DEO SACRIFICATVRVS AD SVPPLICIA DVCITVRO TEMPORA INFAVSTA QVIBVS INTER SA-

CRA ET VOTA NE IN CAVERNIS QVIDEM
SALVARI POSSIMVS QVID MISERIVS
VITA SED QVID MISERIVS IN MORTE
CVM AB AMICIS ET PARENTIBVS SE-
PELIRI NEQVEANT TANDEM IN COELO
CORVSCANT PARVM VIXIT QVI VIXIT
IV. X. TEM .

In Christ. Alexander is not dead, but lives beyond the stars, and his body rests in this tomb. He lived under the Emperor Antonine, who, foreseeing that great benefit would result from his services, returned evil for good. For, while on his knees, and about to sacrifice to the true God, he was led away to execution. O, sad times! in which sacred rites and prayers, even in caverns, afford no protection to us. What can be more wretched than such a life? and what than such a death? when they could not be buried by their friends and relations—at length they sparkle in heaven. He has scarcely lived, who has lived in Christian times.

From these words it is to be inferred, that Alexander was praying in the catacombs when discovered by the emissaries of Antonine. This event belongs to the fifth persecution, which began in the year 161. The second Antonine is here intended, the first emperor of that name having been friendly to the Christians.

A number of circumstances in this inscription are worthy of notice — the beginning, in which the first two words (Alexander mortuus), after leading us to expect a lamentation, break out into an assurance of glory and immortality— the description of the temporal insecurity in which the believers

of that time lived — the difficulty of procuring Christian burial for the martyrs — the certainty of their heavenly reward — and, lastly, the concluding sentence forcibly recalling the words of St. Paul, "as dying, yet behold we live;" and again, "I die daily." It must be confessed that the epitaph does not directly affirm that Alexander was put to death on account of his religion, but would imply that the private hatred of the emperor found in it a pretext for his destruction.

The edicts of Roman emperors often noticed the cemeteries as a place of worship: among them may be specified that of Maximin, issued on the renewal of the Diocletian persecution, forbidding any meeting of the Christians in the catacombs. The same prohibition is mentioned in the Proconsular Acts, where Æmilianus, a prefect of Egypt during the persecution under Valerian, is represented as saying to the Christians, "I see you are an ungrateful people, and have no proper sense of the goodness of the emperors: I shall therefore banish you from Alexandria, and send you to Lybia. Moreover, it shall be no longer lawful for you or for others to hold assemblies, nor to enter the cemeteries, as they are called."

Tertullian relates that on one occasion, under the government of Hilario, the Pagans raised an outcry against the cemeteries of the Christians, and demanded that they should be destroyed.* This

* Ep. ad Scapulam, cap. 5.

suggestion was never carried into effect: indeed at the close of the Valerian persecution, Gallienus gave formal permission to the bishops to return to the catacombs.*

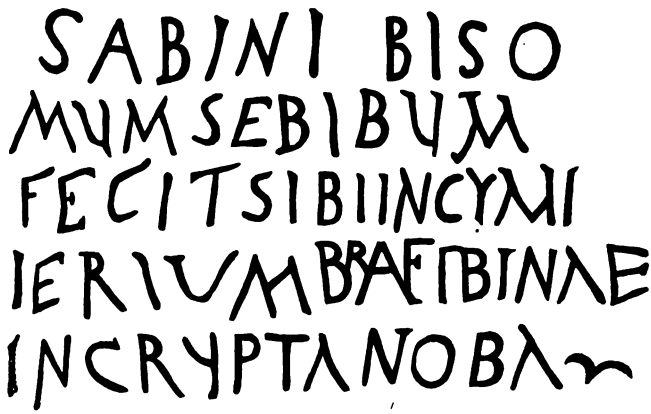
After this general description of the catacombs, from their origin as sand-pits dug by the heathen, to the time of their employment as an asylum and a cemetery by the Christians, it is proposed to examine them in detail, and to set before the reader the customs, sufferings, and works of those by whom they were occupied.

* Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. cap. 13.

CHAPTER III.

THE CATACOMBS AS A CHRISTIAN CEMETERY.

THE annexed inscription (copied in facsimile from the Lapidarian Gallery) is brought forward principally to prove the ancient use of the term cemetery as applied to the catacombs:



With the help of a few grammatical corrections, it reads thus: "Sabini bisomum; se vivo fecit sibi in cemeterio Balbinæ, in cryptâ novâ;" and may be translated, "The bisomum of Sabinus. He made it for himself during his lifetime, in the cemetery of Balbina in the new crypt."*

Besides the older galleries dug for the purpose of extracting sand and puzzolana, the Christians

* St. Balbina was a virgin of some celebrity; she was buried on the Via Ardeatina, and the catacomb was named after her. Aringhi, p. 479.

continued to excavate fresh passages for their own convenience. These additions, distinguished by their superior height and regularity, were called *new crypts*. The earth taken out of them was generally thrown into old branches of the galleries, some of them filled with graves; a circumstance which has given rise to many conjectures. Boldetti, having found part of a catacomb blocked up with earth at its entrance, but empty further back, and lined with the graves of martyrs, supposed that the Christians had taken this means of preserving their most valued relics during the Diocletian persecution. Roestell thinks this improbable, because they would not have willingly cut off their own access to the graves of the martyrs. May not the fugitives have cast up these mounds as obstacles to the pursuit of their enemies? since, by blocking up the principal passages, and leaving open only those known to themselves, they might render the galleries beyond quite inaccessible to their persecutors.

The ramifications of the catacombs may be classed in two divisions: those originally dug for the purpose of procuring sand, known by their irregularity, as well as by their smaller dimensions; and the additions made by the Christians, when want of space obliged them either to dig fresh galleries, or to square and enlarge some of those already existing. These new crypts, mentioned in several inscriptions, are supposed to belong to the more peaceful times of Christianity, when the cus-

tom of burying in the catacombs had become so completely established, that even after it was no longer a necessary precaution, subterranean sepulture was preferred. Vicinity to the tombs of saints and martyrs, so highly valued in that age, was an inducement to the continuance of the practice, and is often alluded to in inscriptions. The following was found in the cemetery of St. Cyriaca:

IN CRVPTA NOBA RETRO SAN
CTVS EMERVMSE VIVAS BALER
RA ET SABINA MERUM LOC
VBISONIA BAPRONE ET A
BIATORE.

Read: — In cryptâ novâ retro sanctos emerunt se vivis Valeria et Sabina. Emerunt locum bisomum ab Aprone et a Viatore.*
Translate: — In the new crypt, behind the saints, Valeria and Sabina bought (it) for themselves while living. They bought a bisomum from Apro and Viator.

The two inscriptions just quoted agree in several particulars: the barbarism of the Latinity, and the want of all attempt at grammatical construction in the sentences, indicate either a time of extreme corruption of the vernacular language, or ignorance among the Christian artists. The word bisomum also occurs in both; a term compounded of Greek and Latin, signifying a place for two bodies: the words *trisomum* and *quadrisomum*, applied to graves

* In the work of Raoul Rochette the rendering *merum locum bisomum* is given for *emerunt locum bisomum*. From the occurrence of the word *emerum* for *emerunt* just before, the author is inclined to adopt the reading given above; the more so from not having found the word *merum* in any other inscription.

capable of containing three or four bodies, are of less frequent occurrence. The latter is found in the annexed inscription, copied from the Lap. Gall.

SVLATV NICOMACI FLABIANI LOCV MARMARARI QVADRISOMVM.

Read — Consulatu Nicomaci Flaviani locum marmorario quadrisomum.

We may safely attribute this fragment to the year 272, in which Nicomacus and Falsonius (or Falconius) were consuls.

"In cemeterio Balbinæ" — in the sleeping-place of Balbina. In this short phrase are implied two important circumstances, entirely at variance with the customs and feeling of Pagan Rome. First, we learn from it the existence of common cemeteries, which we find to have contained persons of every class, as well as families connected with each other only by their profession of Christianity. The heathen Romans, as we know, had sepulchres appropriated either to a single body, or to all the members of one tribe, — witness the tomb of the Scipios, the tomb of the Nasones, and many others. Within the last two or three years there has been discovered at Rome, a columbarium of great beauty, capable of containing three hundred cinerary urns. The niches for these, disposed round the walls and central supports, give the whole chamber the appearance of a dove-cote, whence its name of columbarium. It was intended for the dependents of a particular house, with whose remains it is nearly filled.

The "common sepulchre" of the dregs of the people is spoken of by Horace with contempt; and

if we look back through the history of the world, we find every where the disposition to build tombs for the exclusive use of individual families. The mummy-pits of Egypt, as the author has learnt from personal inspection, are constructed upon this principle. "He was buried with his fathers" is a common conclusion to the history of a Jewish patriarch. It was reserved for Christianity first to deposit side by side the bodies of persons unconnected with each other,—an arrangement which prevails throughout the whole of Christendom, from the catacombs of ancient Rome, to the modern churchyards of our own country.

It is imagined by Roestell, that the grave of a martyr was generally a nucleus, round which others clustered, in order that their occupants might share the benefit of the prayers offered up before it. But, in considering this to be the origin of common cemeteries, that learned writer supposes sentiments unknown so early as the end of the first century. It is easier to conceive that the religion which was to unite mankind into one brotherhood, which actually occasioned a community of goods among its earliest converts, and which held forth the hope of a common resurrection, would suggest the idea of continuing the relationship between members of the church after their death. As far as the writer has had an opportunity of examining the catacombs, there appears no trace of any accumulation of tombs around those of the martyrs*: the graves

* The Catacomb Chapels, containing martyrs' bones beneath the altar, are of later date.

are distributed irregularly along the passages, and here and there one is marked with the supposed symbols of martyrdom. The title of martyr does not occur on a tombstone (to the best of the author's knowledge) before the persecution of Diocletian: nor is it found in the Lapidarian Gallery. This assertion is not meant to extend to a few votive tablets erected in after times to the memory of earlier believers.

From the words in the last inscription, *retro sanctos*, " behind the saints," as well as from those in the next, " in the place of the blessed," it would appear that proximity to the graves of distinguished Christians was thought worthy of being recorded in an epitaph:—

ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΠΑΥΛΕΙΝΑ
ΚΕΙΤΑΙΜΑΚΑΡΩΝ
ΕΝΙΧΩΡΩ
ΗΝΚΗΔΕΥΣΕ ΠΑΚΑΤΑ
ΕΗΝΘΡΕΠΤΕΙΡΑΝ
ΓΑΥΚΕΡΗΝ
ΑΓΙΑΝΕΝΧΡ$\overline{\Omega}$.

This inscription, copied from a beautiful sarcophagus of the fourth or fifth century, may be read:—"Here lies Paulina in the place of the blessed; — Pacata, to whom she was nurse, buried her, an amiable and holy person — In Christ."

The second circumstance of note connected with the phrase " in cemeterio Balbinæ," is the use of the term *cemetery*, derived from the Greek, κοιμητηριον, and signifying a sleeping-place. In this auspicious word, now for the first time applied

to the tomb, there is manifest a sense of hope and immortality, the result of a new religion. A star had risen on the borders of the grave, dispelling the horror of darkness which had hitherto reigned there: the prospect beyond was now cleared up, and so dazzling was the view of an eternal city "sculptured in the sky," that numbers were found eager to rush through the gate of martyrdom, for the hope of entering its starry portals.

St. Paul speaks of the Christian as one not intended to sorrow as others who had no hope: how literally *their* sorrow was described by him, may be judged from the following Pagan inscription, copied from the right hand wall of the Lapidarian Gallery:—

C. IVLIVS. MAXIMVS
ANN. II. M. V.
ATROX O FORTVNA TRVCI QVAE FVNERE GAVDES
QVID MIHI TAM SVBITO MAXIMVS ERIPITVR
QVI MODO IVCVNDUS GREMIO SVPERESSE SOLEBAT
HIC LAPIS IN TVMVLO NUNC IACET ECCE MATER.

Caius Julius Maximus
(aged)
2 years and 5 months.
O, relentless Fortune, who delightest in cruel death,
Why is Maximus so early snatched from me?
He, who lately used to lie, beloved, on my bosom.
This stone now marks his tomb — behold his mother.

But the Christian, not content with calling his burial-ground a sleeping-place, pushes the notion of a slumber to its full extent. We find the term in a Latin dress, as—

DORMITIO ELPIDIS

"The sleeping-place, or dormitory, of Elpis." (Fabretti, lib. 8.)

Elsewhere it is said that —

VICTORINA DORMIT.

"Victorina sleeps." (Boldetti.)

ZOTICVS HIC AD DORMIENDVM.

"Zoticus laid here to sleep." (Boldetti.)

Of another we read —

"Gemella sleeps in peace. (Lapidarian Gallery.)

And, lastly, we find the certainty of a resurrection and other sentiments equally befitting a Christian, expressed in the following, (copied literatim from the Lapidarian Gallery).

PAX
HIC MIHI SEMPER DOLOR ERIT IN AEVO
ET TVVM BENERABILEM BVLTVM LICEAT VIDERE SO—ORE
CONIVNX ALBANAQVE MIHI SEMPER CASTA PVDICA
RELICTVM ME TVO GREMIO QVEROR
QVOD MIHI SANCTVM TE DEDERAT DIVINITVS AVTOR
RELICTIS TVIS IACES IN PACE SOPORE
MERITA RESVRGIS γ TEMPORALIS TIBI DATA REQVETIO
QVE VIXIT ANNIS XLV MENV· DIES XIII
DEPOSITA IN PACE FECIT PLACVS γ MARITVS

PEACE.

This grief will always weigh upon me: may it be granted me to behold in sleep your revered countenance. My wife Albana, always chaste and modest, I grieve, deprived of your support

for our Divine Author gave you to me as a sacred (boon). You, well-deserving one, having left your (relations), lie in peace — in sleep — you will arise — a temporary rest is granted you. She lived forty-five years, five months, and thirteen days: buried in peace. Placus, her husband, made this.

Nor was the hope of the Christians confined to their own bosoms. They published it abroad to all the world, in a manner which, while it provoked the scorn and malice of many, proved also a powerful inducement to others to join their community. The dismal annihilation of the soul taught by the Pagans, or the uncertain Elysium, which, though received by the uneducated, was looked upon as mere matter of superstition by the learned, had in it something so utterly unsuited to the wants and longings of mankind, that the spectacle of a Christian, thoroughly assured of a future state, so blessed and so certain as to have power to draw him irresistibly towards it through the extremest tortures, must have awakened in the heart of many a wishing, doubting Pagan, a feeling in favour of Christianity not easily suppressed. But, with the more infuriated persecutors, the view of a triumphant exit only served to stir up a desperate desire to deprive the martyr of his last expectation; and connecting the interment of the body with the prospect of its being restored to life, they thought by preventing the one, to cut off all hope of the other. In the well-known epistle of the churches of Lyons and Vienne, descriptive of their sufferings during the persecution of Antonine in the second century,

this last effort of malice on the part of their enemies is noticed.

" The bodies of the martyrs having been contumeliously treated and exposed for six days, were burnt and reduced to ashes, and scattered by the wicked into the Rhone, that not the least particle of them might appear on the earth any more. And they did these things, as if they could prevail against God, and prevent a resurrection: and that they might, as they expressed it, destroy the hope of a future life, — 'on which relying they introduce a new and strange religion, despise the most excruciating tortures, and die with joy. Now let us see if they will rise again, and if their God can help them and deliver them out of our hands.'"

The custom of burying the dead was brought to Rome from the East, where the Jewish converts had inherited it. Prudentius states, that the prospect of a resurrection was the motive of the honours and attentions paid to the departed. " There will soon come a time when genial warmth shall revisit these bones, and the soul will resume its former tabernacle, animated with living blood. The inert corpses, long since corrupted in the tomb, shall be borne through the 'thin air*,' in company with the souls. For this reason is such care bestowed upon the sepulchre: such honour paid to the motionless limbs — such luxury displayed in funerals. We spread the linen cloth of spotless white — myrrh and frankincense embalm the body.

* 'Volucres rapientur in auras." Cathemerinon. Hymn, x.

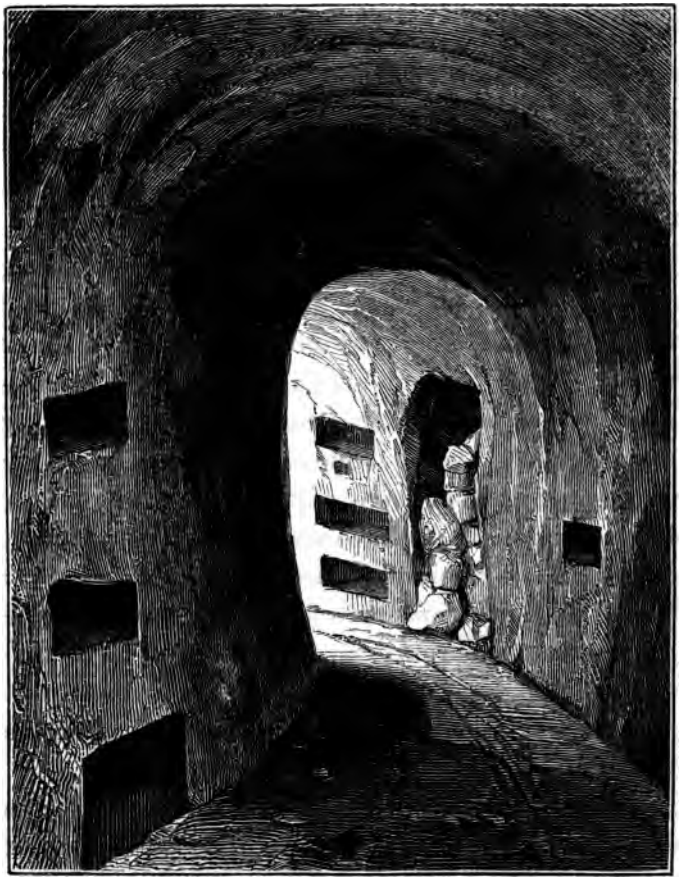
What do these excavated rocks signify? What these fair monuments? What, but that the object intrusted to them is sleeping, and not dead. * * * * * * But now death itself is blessed, since through its pangs a path is thrown open to the just, a way from sorrow to the stars. * * * We will adorn the hidden bones with violets and many a bough; and on the epitaph and the cold stones we will sprinkle liquid odours."

The ceremonies performed on these occasions are alluded to by authors of the time. Paulinus of Nola says of the surviving friends, "Let them carefully sprinkle the tomb of the martyr with spikenard, and bring medicated ointments to the holy grave." The "Acts" represent the Prefect Maximus as saying to Tarachus, "You fancy, wickedest of men, that those women of yours (mulierculæ) will obtain your body after your death, in order to preserve it with spices and ointments? But I will find some way of exterminating your very dust."* Boldetti relates that an odour of spices was perceived on opening some of the graves. Tertullian, in answer to the objection made by the political economists of his day, that the new religion was unfavourable to commerce, exclaims, "Is not incense brought from a distance? If Arabia should complain, tell the Sabeans that more of their merchandise, and that of a more expensive quality, is employed in burying Christians than in fumigating the gods." †

* Ruinart. Acta Tarachi, Probi, &c.

† Apologeticus, cap. 42.

It is time to set before the reader the appearance and construction of the cemeteries from which these monuments have been taken. In the greater number of galleries the height is about eight or ten feet, and the width from four to six: in the annexed drawing the author has attempted to express their usual appearance.



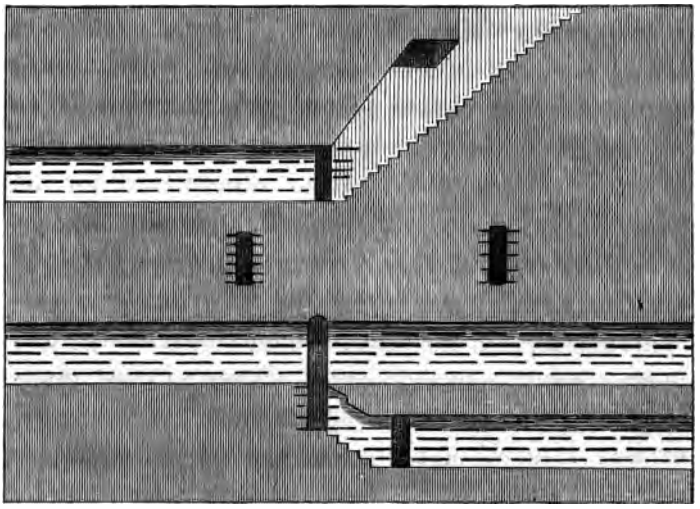
INTERIOR OF A CATACOMB.

The graves are cut in the walls, either in a straggling line, or in tiers, represented by d'Agincourt as occasionally amounting to six in height. The large grave at the bottom of the drawing is a bisomum, cut downwards as well as inwards in the tufa. Further back is seen a branch of the gallery walled off to prevent accidents, which still occasionally happen to those who penetrate much beyond the entrance. The daylight finding its way into the mouth of the cavern, as described by Prudentius, serves to render visible the rifled sepulchres. There is seen in the more distant part of the gallery a small square hole, in which was originally deposited a cup.

Antiquarians have not succeeded in explaining the fact, that most of the graves near the entrance of the catacombs are so small as scarcely to allow room for the body of a child. The want of solidity in the material prevented the excavators, or fossors, as they were termed, from completing the graves before they were required, since the falling in of the soil would have destroyed their form: it is therefore possible that these small cells may have been the commencement of large graves thus begun, and from various causes left unfinished. Boldetti found some branches of the catacombs with the intended sepulchres merely sketched upon the walls.

The galleries often run in stories two or three deep, communicating with each other by flights of

steps. The plan of such a catacomb is here copied from d'Agincourt, vol. iv. pl. ix.

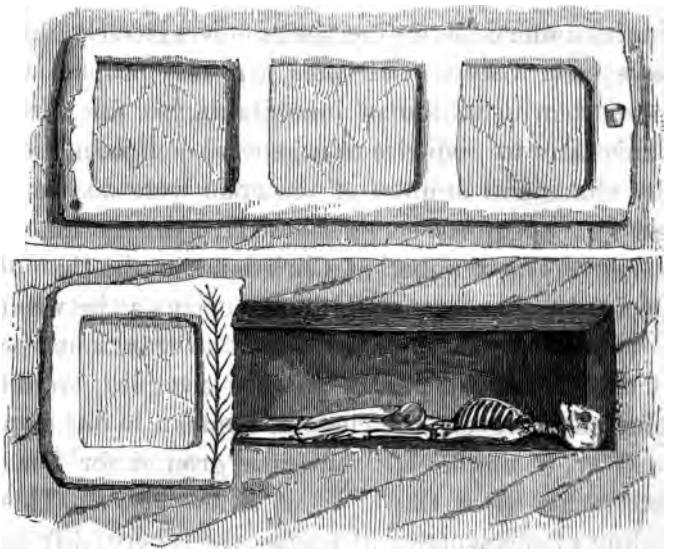


At the top is seen the entrance, partly formed like a shaft, and partly like an oblique gallery with steps: on reaching a certain depth, this passage takes a horizontal direction, giving off a lateral branch. Below it are seen the sections of two corridors running towards the spectator; and still lower, communicating with each other by a staircase partly seen *en face*, are two others parallel with the uppermost one. All these appear completely filled with graves, to the number of five and even six tiers. The steps leading downwards are mentioned by Prudentius in a passage already quoted; and both he and Jerome describe the numerous perpendicular shafts by which the subterranean

ways were lighted. Many of these communications with the upper air are of a date more recent than the times of persecution, and would have been fatal to the safety of the refugees. D'Agincourt gives a sketch of one of the later perforations communicating with a chapel below ground: chapels so lighted were called *cubicula clara.* Boldetti supposes the pits in question to have been sunk for the extraction of sand: but Rœstell, adducing the fact that they are found in Christian additions, thinks them to have been made with a view to the admission of light.* At the present time, many such holes are found in the Campagna near Rome, proving dangerous to the incautious rider. D'Agincourt availed himself of them on several occasions to enter the Catacombs. Some of those inspected by the writer, seem to have been produced by the falling in of the ground through the roof of a gallery too nearly approaching the surface. On the other hand, it is probable that some of the air-holes, called in the Acts of the Martyrs *luminaria cryptæ*, were in existence during the persecutions. In the Acts of Marcellinus and Peter, quoted by Raoul Rochette, it is said, "Candida, a saint and a virgin, having been thrown down the precipice, (that is, the light-hole of the crypt,) was overwhelmed with stones." The corresponding passage in Baronius is somewhat different, nor does it contain the word *luminare.*

* Bunsen's Rome, vol. i. p. 365.

In the subjoined view, copied from Boldetti, are seen two graves; one still closed by three slabs of



terra cotta, cemented to the rock by plaster; and the other partially opened, so as to display the skeleton lying within. It must not be supposed that in all cases the slabs were of terra cotta, or that their usual number was three; pieces of marble, of the most irregular figure, were often employed. The palm branch is scratched upon the plaster with a sharp instrument.

The number of graves contained in the Catacombs is very great. In order to form a general estimate of them, we must remember that from the year 98 A. D. to some time after the year 400, (of both which periods consular dates have been found in

the cemeteries,) the whole Christian population of Rome was interred there. As this time includes nearly a century after the establishment of Christianity under Constantine, the numbers latterly must have been very considerable. A city peopled by more than a million of inhabitants, so far christianised as to give rise to a general complaint that the altars and temples of the gods were deserted, must have required cemeteries of no ordinary dimensions.* The number of Christians in the time of Decius has been estimated by historians at between forty and fifty thousand. Added to this, a horror of disturbing the graves already occupied, would effectually prevent the custom, common in our own country, of employing the same ground for fresh interments after the lapse of a few years. This feeling of the sanctity of tombs was inherited from the heathen, and was often expressed in their epitaphs. An instance is subjoined, in an inscription, evidently Pagan from the connection between the infernal regions and happiness. It was found inside the Aurelian gate: —

C. TULIUS. C. L.
BARNAEUS
OLLA· EJUS· SI· QUI
OU VIOLARIT· AD
INFEROS· NON RECIPIATUR.

C. Tullius Barnaeus. If any one violate his urn, let him not be received into the infernal regions (that is, Elysium).

* The general absence of Heathen cemeteries greatly facilitates the distinction between the Christian and Pagan remains.

There is perhaps no trace of this feeling visible in the Christian collection of the Lapidarian gallery, though a superstitious awe on the subject is betrayed in some inscriptions found elsewhere; as in the following, of uncertain date, copied from Aringhi. The mention of Judas proves its Christian origin: —

MALE · PEREAT · INSEPVLTVS
IACEAT · NON · RESVRGAT
CVM · IVDA · PARTEM · HABEAT
SI · QVIS · SEPVLCHRVM · HVNC VIOLAVERIT.

If any one violate this sepulchre, let him perish miserably, lie unburied, and not arise, but have his lot with Judas.

The style of this epitaph fixes its date as much later than the times of Pagan persecution. The words *hunc sepulchrum*, taken in conjunction with the well-expressed lines that complete the sentence, seem to refer us to the epoch when Latin showed strong marks of Italian construction: that is, from the eighth to the twelfth century, while the language was in suspense between the written Latin and the spoken Italian. As the same article is applied to neuter and masculine in the latter tongue, the blunder of *hunc sepulchrum* would be natural to one in the habit of using the expression *questo sepolcro*.

The form of this imprecation somewhat resembles that of cursing with "bell, book, and candle," by the Romish Church. "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of our blessed Lady the most holy Mary, also by virtue of the angels and

archangels, we separate M. and N. from the bosom of our holy Mother the Church; and condemn them with the anathema of everlasting cursing. * * * Let them be buried with the burial of an ass, and be as dung upon the face of the earth. And as these lights thrown from our hands, are this day extinguished, so may their light be extinguished everlastingly, unless they repent."*

* An anathema was frequently inscribed on the title-page of books in the middle ages, when the fashion of employing curses in defence of property came into fashion. Three instances of the practice, given in Maitland's "Dark Ages," belong to the ninth and eleventh centuries: one of them resembles the above in containing an allusion to Judas: — "If any one remove from the monastery this book, with the intention of not restoring it, let him receive the portion of everlasting condemnation, with Judas the traitor, Annas, and Caiaphas." Truly, as Mr. Maitland has observed, "it was enough to frighten the possessor of a book, however honestly he might have come by it."

The author lately found, in a copy of Erasmus's Latin Testament, the following milder threat: —

"Quis rapit hunc pravo furto seu fraude libellum,
Non mortalis homo, sed Deus ultor erit."

Several doggrel imitations of these lines are occasionally found in books almost of our own times.

The fragment of an ancient epitaph, quoted by Mabillon from Fabretti, betrays rather superstitious horror of an interference with the resurrection, than a mere absence of Christian sentiment: —

* * * GRAVIT AD XPM
* * * SEPVLCRVM VIOLARE
* ET SIT ALIENVS A REGNO DEI.

The sense is, "* * * has gone to dwell with Christ. If any one dare to violate this grave, let him * * * and be far from the kingdom of God."

Although the tombs once made and occupied were left untouched by after generations, the multitude of bodies thrown into one sepulchre in times of danger must have lessened the number of separate graves. Prudentius, in his hymn on the Martyrdom of Hippolitus, thus describes the appearance of the cemeteries in his own time:—"We see in the city of Romulus innumerable remains of saints: you ask, Valerian, what epitaphs are engraved upon the tombs, and what are the names of those buried; a question difficult for me to answer. So great a host of the just did the impious rage of the heathen sweep away, when Trojan Rome would have her country's gods worshipped. Many sepulchres marked with letters display the name of the martyr, or else some anagram. There are also dumb stones closing silent tombs, which only tell the number buried within. So that we know how many bodies lie in the heap, though we read no names belonging to them. I remember being told that sixty were buried under one mound, whose names Christ alone preserves, as being those of his peculiar friends." Tombs of this sort are mentioned by antiquarians, under the name of Polyandria: they are mostly found in the cemetery of Marcellinus, and appear to be an imitation of the old *puticuli* of the Pagans. They furnished to some travellers an argument against the Christian character of the Catacombs; but the testimony of Prudentius, living in the fourth century, effectually silences such reasoning.

An inscription usually supposed to belong to a Polyandridrium, is the following: —

MARCELLA ET CHRISTI
MARTYRES
CCCCCL.

Marcella and five hundred and fifty martyrs of Christ.

The apparent impossibility of collecting such an "army of martyrs" into one grave, makes it probable either that the epitaph is a votive tablet, raised to the victims of a persecution collectively, or that it is a general summary of the contents of a cemetery, expressed in round numbers. Rœstell is inclined to consider such epitaphs as commemorative of the martyrs of a past age.* He gives another inscription found in the cemetery of S. Lucina: —

N · XXX · SYRRA · ET SENEC · COSS:

which has furnished matter of debate to the learned. It was first supposed that this fragment was part of a numerical arrangement of the graves; but as Visconti showed that no such system existed, it was obviously absurd to imagine one grave numbered alone. But Visconti endeavoured to prove that it referred to the remains of thirty martyrs who suffered during the consulate of Syrra and Senecio. The same view is taken by Rœstell and Raoul Rochette. The author is inclined to adopt a much more simple method of explaining the

* Bunsen's Rome, vol. i. p. 372.

N.XXX; and would read the remaining words as the fragment of

QVI VIXIT ANN. XXX SYRRA ET SENEC · COSS.

—who lived thirty years. In the consulate of Syrra and Senecio; that is, A.D. 102, the first year in which they governed. This form of inscription is quite common, and may be seen in the following:—

AVRELIA DVLCISSIMA FILIA QUAE
DE SAECVLO RECESSIT VIXIT ANN · XV · M · IIII ·
SEVERO ET QUINTIN COSS ·

Aurelia, our sweetest daughter, who departed from the world, Severus and Quintinus being consuls. She lived fifteen years and four months. (A. D. 235.)

The consular epitaphs are our principal means of fixing the dates of graves and cemeteries. That belonging to A. D. 102 is the earliest that we possess, with the exception of one found by Boldetti, in St. Lucina's cemetery, of the year 98.

D. M.
P. LIBERIO VICXIT
ANI N. II. MENSES N. III.
DIES N. VIII. R. ANICIO
FAUSTO ET VIRIO GALLO
COSS.

Publius Liberio lived two years, three months, and eight days. Anicius Faustus and Virius Gallus being consuls.

After these two comes one of A.D. 111. (Boldetti.)

SERVILIA · · ANNORVM · XIII
PIS · ET BOL · COSS ·

Servilia, aged thirteen. Died in the consulate of Piso and Bolanus.

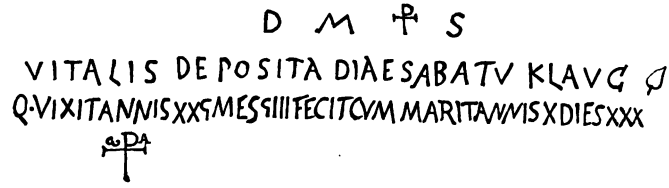
Subsequently to this time the consular epitaphs become more common.

The following consulates have been copied, without selection, from the Christian inscriptions contained in the Vatican Library and Lapidarian Gallery: they show the usual dates of the consular epitaphs.

Cæsarius and Atticus - - -	A. D. 397
Victor and Valentinianus - - -	369
Cl. Julianus Aug. and Sallustius - -	363
Marcellinus and Probinus - - -	341
Datianus and Cerealis - - - -	358
Valentinianus and Valens Aug. III. - -	370

In the above inscription to Liberio, the letters D. M. have usually been rendered Deo Maximo, because found in a Christian cemetery. It is but fair to add, that they are also the universal contraction for the first words of a Pagan epitaph, Diis manibus—to the Divine manes—or souls of the dead. The subject is not free from perplexity; and an argument has been drawn from these letters, against the assertion that no heathen graves are contained in the catacombs. But many inscriptions beginning with D. M. are undoubtedly Christian; and, besides the probability of these letters being here put for Deo Maximo, it is possible that the ignorance of the sculptor led him to continue the old heathen formula, neither understanding its meaning, nor reflecting upon its unsuitableness to a Christian grave. A most decisive

specimen of this sort of inscription is found in a wall of the Vatican Library.



Sacred to Christ, the Supreme God.

Vitalis, buried on Saturday, Kalends of August. She lived with her husband ten years and thirty days. In Christ, the First and the Last. Aged twenty-five years and three months.

There is, however, a Christian epitaph quoted by Rœstell, which runs as follows:

Diis manibus
Principio filio dulcissimo suo posuit,
Quæ vixit ann. vj. dies xx.
In pace.

On this he remarks, "It is very possible that the words Diis manibus are attributable to careless imitation of heathen customs in the fifth or sixth century: or that the inscription, originally Pagan, was afterwards affixed to a Christian grave, with the alteration of the numbers and of the proper name."*

The employment of old Pagan tombstones was common after the time of Constantine: but the usual custom in such cases was to reverse the marble, and to engrave the Christian epitaph upon the opposite side. According to antiquarians, many

* Raoul Rochette thinks the last suggestion of very little value: the Christian sculptor should have erased the objectionable letters with the rest.—Mem. de l'Acad. de Belles-Lettres, tom. xiii.

stones have been discovered with unequivocal marks of Paganism on one side, and of Christianity on the other: but of this there is now no opportunity left us of judging, as every catacomb tablet has been carefully plastered upon some wall or pillar.

It is not to be expected that persons so uneducated as many whose monuments have come down to us, should have always avoided heathen usages, in the practice of which they had grown up. Besides the D. M., such expressions as the following are occasionally found:—

DOMVS ETERNALIS
AVRCHSI ET AVRILAR
ITATIS CONPARIM
EES FECIMVS NOBIS.

An eternal home, &c. (Lap. Gall.) It is uncertain whether the two mutilated names belong to the reigning consuls, or to the two persons who made the tomb. The form of expression is somewhat varied in the next, which is copied from a wall of the Vatican Library.

AVRELIO FELICI QVI BIXIT CUM COIVCE·
AN·NOS·X·VIII DULCIS·IN COIVGIO·
BONE MEMORIE BIXIT·ANNOS·L·V·
RAPTVS ETERNE DOMVS·XII KAL. IENVARIAS,

In peace. To Aurelius Felix, who lived with his wife eighteen years in sweetest wedlock. Of good memory. He lived fifty-five years. Snatched home eternally on the twelfth kalends of January.

These inscriptions do not imply any want of belief in the resurrection on the part of those who erected them. The word *home* is so used in Ecclesiastes—"Man goeth to his long home:" and both Job and David employ similar expressions—"I shall go the way whence I shall not return;" and, "Before I go hence, and be no more." The phrase "æterna quies" is found in heathen inscriptions.

The leaf often seen on gravestones is employed by way of punctuation, or merely as an ornament. It has been mistaken for the symbol of an afflicted heart, pierced with an arrow: but it is simply borrowed from the Pagans, who used it in the place of a comma.

Other terms are applied to the grave; as

SEVI LOCV

The place of Sevus.

DEPOSSIO CAMPANI · X
FLAVIO STELICONE VIRO INC

[Depossio, for Depositio Ainsworth's Contractions.]

The burial place of Campanus. Flavius Stelico being Consul, i. e. either in the year 400 or 405. (Lap. Gall.)

The sepulchre of Theodulus and Projecte. (Lap. Gall.)

B·M
CVBICVLVM · AVRELIAE · MARTINAE CASTISSI·
MAEADQVE·PUDI
CISSIMAE FEMINAE QUE FECIT·IN COIVGIO ANN.
XXIII D XIIII
BENE MERENTI · QVE VIXIT · ANN · XL · M · XI · D ·
XIII · DEPOSITIO EIS
DIE · III · NONAS · OCT · NEPOTIANO · ET FACVNDO
CONSS · IN PACE

[For B. M. read Bene Merenti — To the well deserving.] The chamber of Aurelia Martina, my wife, most chaste and modest, who lived in wedlock twenty-three years and fourteen days. To the well-deserving one, who lived forty years, eleven months, and thirteen days. Her burial was on the third nones of October. Nepotianus and Facundus being consuls (i. e. A. D. 336). In peace. (Lap. Gall.)

This inscription nearly approaches the usual Pagan form.

Occasionally, the proper name alone was expressed; as

ACAPE

The next drawing, displaying a tomb closed by a single slab, is copied from d'Agincourt.

Dust is seen lying on the lower wall of the cell, resembling the shadow of a skeleton. It reminds

us of the words of Horace, "We are but dust and a shadow."

It has excited surprise among some, that a persecuted sect should have had the facilities of burial which the Christians seem to have enjoyed, and have succeeded in obtaining the bodies of their martyrs, in order to honour them with a decent funeral. These facts are accounted for, by the great attention paid by the early Christians to the subject of interment. Among others, Praxedes, a virgin, together with her sister Pudentiana, during the Antonine persecution, spent their patrimony in burying martyrs and relieving poor Christians. Surviving friends generally waited for the body of a martyr, thereby exposing themselves to great danger: and it does not appear to have been a very early suggestion of Pagan malice, that the victims of persecution should be deprived of funeral rites.

It is said, perhaps upon no good authority, that the body of St. Hiero was offered to the Christians, after martyrdom, for its weight in gold. Not being able to collect so great a sum, they purchased the head on the same terms.*

The Jews, as in the case of our Lord, of Stephen, and of Paul, when stoned, left the body to the disposal of friends. At times, when the patient endurance of the sufferer had exasperated his persecutors, the body was refused in revenge for the

* This story, as well as that of Praxedes, is related by Aringhi; Roma Subterranea, p. 67—79.

defeat they had sustained. Prudentius, in describing the martyrdom of St. Vincent, represents the judge as hearing of his peaceful death with a degree of disappointed malice, which he (the poet) can scarcely find words to describe.* "You would suppose, that the dragon was raging disarmed, with his teeth broken,—'he has gone off triumphant,' he exclaims, 'and as a rebel carried away the palm. But it still remains to inflict the last punishment upon him; to give his body to the beasts, his carcase to be devoured by dogs. I will extirpate his very bones, lest the rites of sepulture should be paid to them: lest the congregation should honour him, and raise to him a martyr's epitaph.'"

Not only the importance attached to burial, but also the feeling of reverence for the dead, soon became excessive. Sepulchres and remains, even in the fourth century formed an object of veneration, and were almost considered a means of grace. "It is scarcely known," observes Prudentius, about the year 400, "how full Rome is of buried saints: how richly the metropolitan soil abounds in holy sepulchres. But we," he adds with a solemnity almost puerile, "we, who are not so blessed, and cannot behold around us the traces of blood, nevertheless, look up from afar unto heaven." Happy

* Peristephanon, Hymn II.

"At Christiani nominis
Hostem coquebant inrita
Fellis venena, et lividum
Cor efferata exusserant."

had it been for all Christendom, to want these most questionable blessings, could the absence of them have given to their thoughts and prayers a more heavenward tendency.

During the unusually long period of tranquillity which occurred between the sixth and seventh persecutions, Callistus, bishop of Rome about the year 220, greatly enlarged and improved the Catacombs since named after St. Sebastian, from which circumstance they were at that time called the Cemetery of Callistus. The entrance to them is through the Basilica of St. Sebastian on the Appian way, about two miles beyond the gate of the city. Notwithstanding the little credence usually given to the story of Sebastian, there seems no good reason for doubting that part of it which relates to the manner of his death. It is important in such cases to distinguish between legends of antiquity, and the artistical version of a story, embellished by the fervid imagination of the later middle ages. Painters have vied with one another in representing the youthful martyr in a state of seraphic abstraction: in the half-draped figure pierced with arrows, the closing eyes already fixed on heavenly glories, and the face lighted up with unearthly smiles, or darkening with the shadow of death, a Guido and a Caracci found a subject favorable to the display of their genius. From the habit of adding to the picture angels with crowns and palms, and of introducing some glaring anachronism, as the presence of the Virgin Mary, or John the Baptist, we are often led to consider

the whole as a fable: yet, on inspecting the Catacombs, the existence of Sebastian is found to rest on good evidence. A small cell has been preserved as the chapel built over the grave of the martyr; and above this have been accumulated all the honours which could be paid to a saint and a hero. Perpendicularly over the grave stands the high altar of the Basilica, with a marble representation of the dead saint, of the size of life. Below ground is a beautiful bust by Bernini; and the fine church over the entrance, as well as the Catacomb itself, perpetuate the name of Sebastian. According to the Acts of his martyrdom, this young officer was shot to death by arrows, but was miraculously restored to life and health. Not content with the glory of one martyrdom, he presented himself to the authorities, and, after a second execution, his body was concealed in a sewer, and hung upon a hook that it might not escape again. He contrived, however, to reveal the secret to a woman by a dream, in consequence of which he was buried in the Catacomb now called after him*.

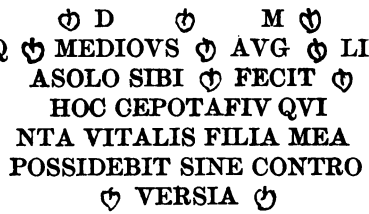
The internal management of the cemeteries now demands our attention.

"The first order among the clergy," says Jerome, "is that of the Fossors, who, after the manner of

* From lying in a sewer, this favorite saint has been promoted by painters to the place formerly occupied by the Bacchus and Adonis, the Ganymede and Endymion of Pagan art. In like manner the Magdalen has supplanted the Venus, while St. Cecilia has taken a place among the Muses.

holy Tobit, are employed in burying the dead." Besides the epitaphs proper to fossors, there are many other inscriptions which allude to them as having sold the tomb to the deceased or his friends. Their importance, as well as the nature of the duties entrusted to them, will be more obvious, when we have compared the funeral regulations of the Pagans with those of the Christians.

Let us take as an illustration of the former, this inscription (copied from a MS. collection in Rome).

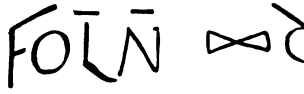


To the Divine Manes. Quintus Mediolus, freed-man of Augustus, made this cepotaph for himself alone. Quinta Vitalis, my daughter, shall possess it without controversy.

The word cepotaph is derived from the Greek κηποταφιον, a tomb in a garden. As the cinerary urns occupied but little space, and were productive of no inconvenience to the neighbourhood, the ashes of the dead were generally deposited in the garden or court-yard of the house, in a small chamber built for that purpose. The columbaria now existing in Rome show this custom on a larger scale. The father of a family, by building such a sepulchre, and raising an inscription to insure the future pos-

session of it, provided a place of interment for his descendants. A few forms of inscription were recognised as regular bequests of this sort of property: among them are; "et posteris suis"—"hæredes hoc monumentum sequitur" — "liberis libertabusque suis" — as well as their initials e. p. s. — h. h. m.s.— l. l. q. s., and others. But with the Christians, who required larger space and a more secluded situation for the decomposition of an entire body, a different system was necessarily adopted. The Catacombs were placed under the management of a number of *fossors*, probably sand-diggers by trade, who, besides excavating graves and rendering the galleries more convenient, served also as guides. Their power of disposing of the graves is well exemplified in the following Christian inscription, which the author copied literatim from a small collection in the walls of the Capitol.

EMPTVM LOCUM A BARTEMISTVM
VISOMVM HOC EST ET PRETIVM
DATVM A FOSSORI HILARO ID EST



FOSS ET LAVRENT

A place bought by Bartemistus, that is to say, a bisomum; and the price was paid to the fossor Hilarus, the sum of fourteen hundred folles (amounting to 1*l.* 2*s.* 7*d.*), in the presence of the fossors, Severus and Lawrence.

The *folis*, or *follis*, here specified, is a small Ro-

man coin, of which mention is seldom made in history. Hotman * professes himself unable to decide upon its value, and merely states that it was a very thin lamina of metal, probably the lowest coin used. By Facciolati † it is defined as synonymous with the quadrans or teruntius; of which, according to Ainsworth, forty make a denarius, value sevenpence three farthings of our money. The numerals attached are not correctly written: the first of them is evidently meant either for the two ovals ∞ put for 1000, or the elongated ⋊ of the same signification. Between these two the sculptor seems to have hesitated, and the reader may indulge in the same uncertainty, without affecting the value of the figure. After 1000, the number of hundreds naturally follows: and the sign used most nearly corresponds to the Ↄ, a variety of G, the abbreviation for 400. ‡ From this to Ↄ the transition is easy, and the identity of the two is the more probable from there being no other known sign at all similar.

To estimate better the value of such a sum as 1*l.* 2*s.* 7*d.* in those times, we may compare with this epitaph one contained in Wordsworth's Pompeian Inscriptions, in which the sum of H.S.LXV., sixty-five sesterces, or nine shillings and sixpence, is offered for the recovery of a lost wine vessel. The thirty pieces of silver received by Judas for his treachery amounted to 3*l.* 10*s.* 8*d.*

* De re nummariâ Populi Romani.

† Appendix to Lexicon. ‡ Facciolati.

The author has not met with any other inscription recording the price of a tomb: what makes this epitaph of Bartemistus the more valuable on the score of authenticity, is the circumstance that though the transaction is clearly stated, the sum is expressed in a very unusual manner, the *follis* being a Latin version of the Greek φολλεις*, probably introduced in the time of the later Cæsars.

The use of the preposition *a* before the dative case in the two preceding epitaphs is remarkable: it seems to mark an approximation to the Italian language, of which it is an established element.

IOVINVS · SIBICOM
PARAVIT · ABICTORI
NO · BISOMV · LOCVET
EXVPERV COLLEGAIPSI

Jovinus bought himself a bisomum from Victorinus and Exuperus his colleague. In Christ. (Lap. Gall.)

To the two inscriptions last quoted the term epitaph can scarcely be applied; they are rather legal conveyances of a portion of the cemetery.

Some inscriptions appear to have been executed in part at the time of the purchase, and concluded after the burial of the occupant of the tomb. There is one of this character in the Lapidarian Gallery.

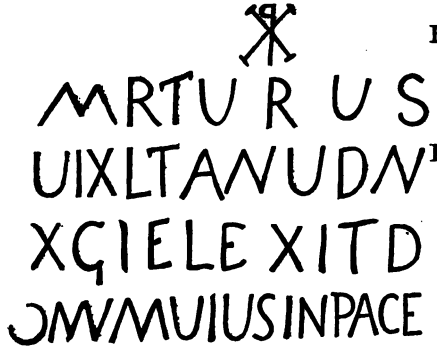
HIC REQIECET
SAMSO IN BISO
MVM ET VCTORV
SE VIVA VXOREIVS

Here rests Samso in a bisomum, and Victoria his wife, she being alive.

* Hotman.

We may infer from this some such family history as the following: — Samso, the husband of Victoria, not having provided himself with a tomb, was left to the care of his widow for burial. She then purchased a bisomum, and having interred her husband, set up a stone to record that there rested Samso; adding *in a bisomum*, thus reserving a place for herself. After her death the inscription was completed; the insertion of the words *herself being alive*, showing that as a respectable woman she had, during her lifetime, provided for her burial.

In the annexed, a Roman Christian is exhibited as selecting the site of his future sepulchre.



Read — Martyrius vixit annos plus minus xci. elexit domum vivus, in pace. (Lap. Gallery.) In Christ. Martyrius lived ninety-one years, more or less. He chose a home during his life-time. In peace.

The substitution of the numeral G for V is so common, that the age of Martyrius is uncertain. From his having lived to choose a tomb, the number of years is more probably ninety-one than sixteen: the monogram has been reversed, through the inattention of the stone-cutter. The name Martyrius has no connection with martyrdom, it being merely a proper name, as well as that of Martyria:

MARTYRIA IN PACE

Martyria in peace. (Lap. Gall.)

There existed formerly on the walls of the Catacombs many paintings, representing persons dressed in the manner of the lowest class of Romans, employed in excavating an overhanging rock, with a lamp suspended from the summit. One of these paintings, copied in the *Roma Sotteranea*, has the words Fossor Trofimus added. The one here given was found by Boldetti, in the cemetery of Callistus.

The inscription signifies—"Diogenes the Fossor, buried in peace on the eighth kalends of October."

On either side is seen a dove with an olive branch, a common emblem of Christian peace. The pick-axe and lamp together plainly designate the subterranean excavator: the spike by which the latter is suspended from the rock, the cutting instruments and compasses used for marking out the graves, and the chapel lined with tombs, among which the fossor stands, mark as distinctly the whole routine of his occupation, as the cross figured on his dress, his Christian profession. The painting is on a retiring part of the wall, and beneath it is a hollow oblong pit, which seems to be the mouth of a grave.

From the instruments figured in this valuable painting, as well as from the testimony of authors, we conclude that the fossors were also employed to excavate and adorn parts of the Catacombs. A great portion of their work must have been connected with the chapels, which were very numerous, and afterwards became more elaborate in their details. The rude attempt of a contemporary artist to represent the occupation of a poor Christian, employed in burying in secret the deceased members of a community, to which no place on the face of the earth was granted for their long home, suggests some serious reflections on the change which Christendom has since undergone. Could we imagine the humble Diogenes, whom we see engaged in his melancholy task, to look out from the entrance to the crypt, and behold, in their present splendour, the domes and palaces of Christian

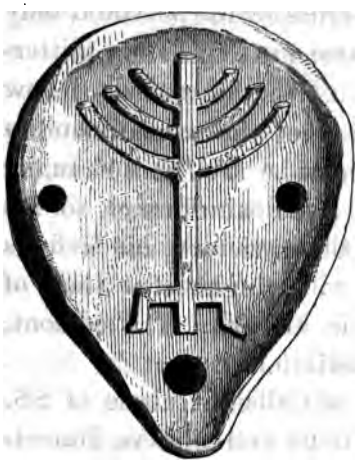
Rome; could he see the cross which *he* could only wear in secret on his coarse woollen tunic, glittering from every pinnacle of the eternal city; how would he hail the arrival of a promised millennium —what triumphs of religion would he not augur from the enjoyment of privileges denied to his own generation! What then would be his feelings when made acquainted with the present state of Italy; or with the tragic histories of Piedmont, Constance, and the Inquisition?

Besides the cemetery of Callistus, those of SS. Agnes, Lawrence, Saturninus and Thraso, Marcellinus and Peter, and several others, have obtained great celebrity. There is also a cemetery below the present Basilica of St. Peter, on the Vatican hill; but it has been so overloaded with the productions of after ages, that little trace of the earlier centuries is left. Most of those works were deposited there when the present church of St. Peter's was erected.

In addition to the Christian cemeteries, there is another that seems to have been appropriated to the Hebrews; but whether as Jews or as Christian converts, is doubtful. It was discovered by Bosio, on the Via Portuense: he could find in it no signs of Christianity, and but one inscription, the word

ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓ

"Synagogue;" together with a lamp (of which a copy is annexed), having upon it a figure of the golden candlestick brought from Jerusalem by Titus.



Munter* has found two other figures of the same candlestick; and Bosio† says that they were commonly employed by the Jews, and occasionally by Christians: he quotes the observation of Josephus, that the figure represented heaven, the seven lamps standing for the sun and six planets. Lamps of terra cotta are found abundantly in the Catacombs; they are generally marked with the cross, with the likenesses of Peter and Paul, or with some other Christian symbol. There is another of these golden candlesticks figured in Buonarotti, with the addition of this mark, which probably represents a horn for pouring in oil. Lastly, in a MS. collection lent to the author by a young Italian who had compiled it from the Jesuits' College in Rome, there is an inscription, of which the annexed is a fac-simile.

ENΘAΔE KEI
TAI ΦAYCTINA

Here lies Faustina. In peace.

* Sinnbilder der alten Christen. † Roma Sotteranea.

This curious epitaph, written "in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin," probably belonged to a Christian Jewess. The horn for oil is seen beside the golden candlestick. On the supposition of the woman having been a Hebrew, we must consider the Latin Faustina to be her Christian name: the palm branch added, is also a Christian symbol of victory and a well-spent life. According to Aringhi, the Jews of Rome generally wrote in Greek. The Hebrew word added to the inscription cannot be interpreted without making some slight alteration in the form of the letters. The circular one seems intended for *mem;* and the first, by the addition of a small central line, would become *schin.* In reading the entire word as שלום *Shalom*, or Peace, we are supported by the custom of the early Christians, who were continually in the habit of adding to their epitaphs *in pace:* witness the annexed fragment from the Lapidarian Gallery.

NPACE †

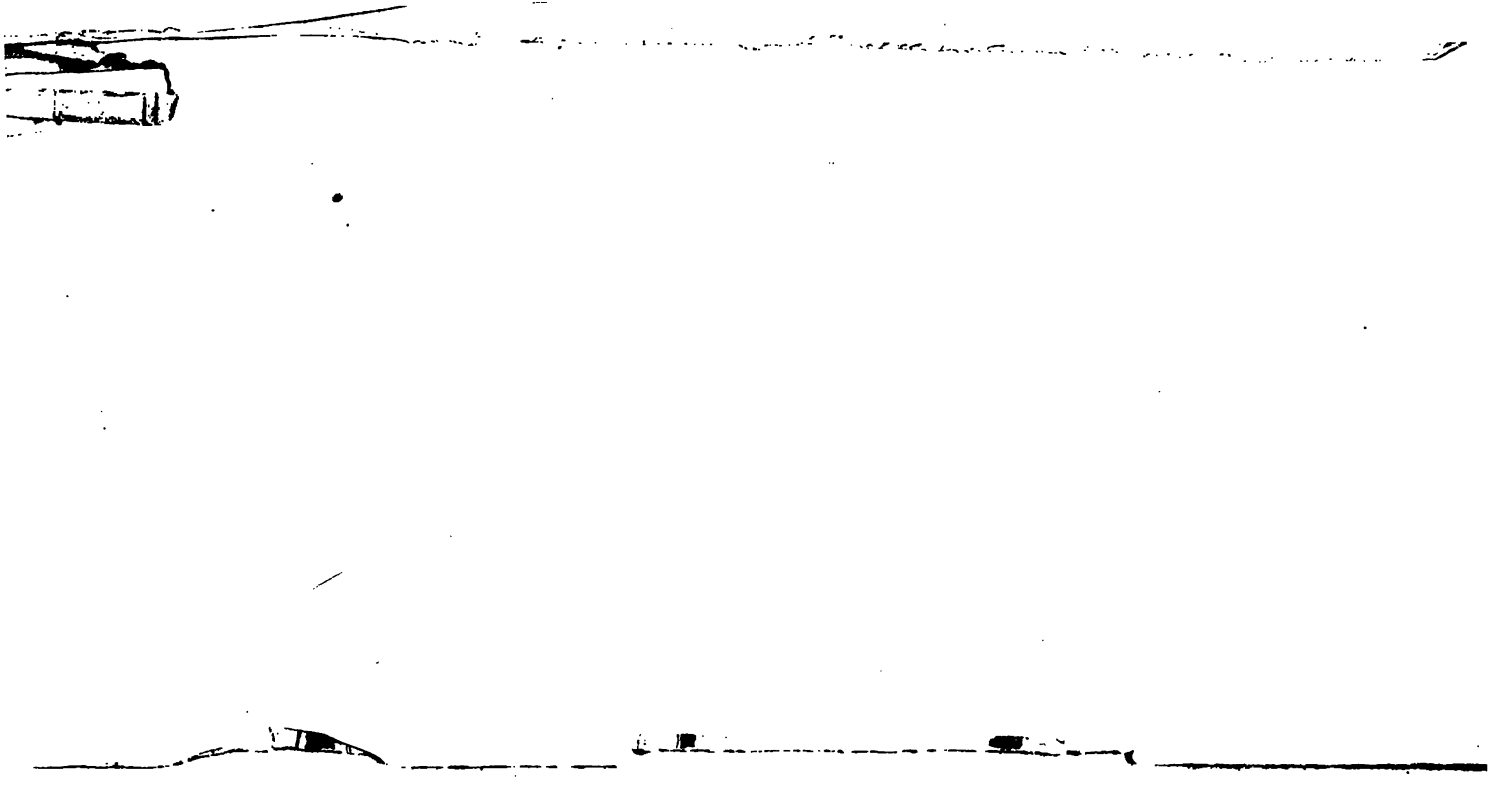
In peace and in Christ.

The Greek version of this expression (εν ειρηνη) is also common, as in this:

EYTPOΠOC EN IPHNH.

Eutropus in peace.

These figures of the golden candlestick are taken from the Triumph of Titus, on the arch of that emperor. The accompanying engraving of this sculpture is from a drawing made on the spot by the author. The work, originally an alto-relievo, by the destruction of the detached parts has be-



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come a bas-relief. It represents the spolia opima taken from Jerusalem, on the way to the Capitol, to be deposited in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The golden candlestick, jubilee trumpets, table of shew-bread, and two small vessels resting upon it, are accompanied by twenty-one figures, and three standards. All the persons represented are Romans; the fifth (reckoning from the left) wears the toga; and the twelfth, seventeenth, and twenty-first, the only bearers whose heads remain, are crowned with laurel. Of the standards, the central one has the remains of an eagle surmounting it, and the same emblem appears in the ornaments on each side of the design.

As the golden vessels of the first temple were cut in pieces by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings, xxiv. 13.), the spoils of the second temple were but copies from the first, aided by the description given in the book of Exodus. The vessel of manna, Aaron's rod, the tables of stone, and the ark of the covenant, could not be replaced; and do not therefore appear in the Roman triumph. Whether the pedestal belonged to the candlestick is doubtful: its containing representations of animals is not an objection to its being Jewish; for, although such figures were in general forbidden, yet we find (1 Kings, vii. 29.) that "lions, oxen, and cherubims" were used as ornaments to the bases of the sea: they are, therefore, not out of place on the base of the candlestick.

The cross bar visible in the table of shew-bread is not alluded to in Exodus, and was probably added to support the silver trumpets during the triumph. The lower "border of an handbreadth" which was covered with gold, and supported the rings, is much mutilated; fortunately, enough remains to show, by comparison with the breadth of the hand below, the accuracy of the dimensions adopted in the work.

The close resemblance between the description of the sacred utensils, and their appearance on the triumphal arch, is a testimony to the truth of Scripture of considerable weight: especially as the evidence is handed down to us by the enemies of the Jewish religion, and perpetuated by the very means intended to cast a lasting reproach upon it.

During the middle ages, the arch of Titus was generally termed the arch of the candelabra, which we may suppose to have formed a principal ornament in the triumph, on its way to the Capitol, the Mount Zion of Paganism:

> Upon the sacred steps from far
> Seen sparkling like a trembling star;
> And casting back the golden ray
> From every polish'd flower and gem,
> Bright, as when once in happier day
> It burnt in high Jerusalem.

Besides the inscriptions written in Greek, we find some consisting of Latin words in Greek characters; as

ANNOYC TPIΓINTA
IN ΠAKE
Annos triginta, in pace.

The substitution of k for *c* soft is curious: the next is probably intended as an imitation of the same sound.

Vidalio, in the peace of Christ.

If the doctrines of Christianity are but sparingly expressed in these epitaphs, they are at least free from the Anacreontic language that characterises many Pagan tablets, a curious specimen of which is given by Gruter:

V · A · N · LVII
D · M
TI · CLAVDI · SECVNDI
HIC · SECVM · HABET · OMNIA
BALNEA · VINVM · VENVS
CORRVMPVNT · CORPORA ·
NOSTRA · SED . VITAM FACIVNT
B · V · V ·
KARO CONTVBERNALI
FEC· MEROPE CAES
ET SIBI ET SVIS P· E ·

To the Divine Manes of Titus Claudius Secundus, who lived 57 years. Here he enjoys every thing. Baths, wine, and love ruin our constitutions, but — they make life what it is. Farewell: farewell. To her dear companion, Merope Cæsarea has erected this. For themselves and their descendants.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MARTYRS OF THE CATACOMBS.

"Vos quoque, corporibus cæsis et sanguine fuso,
Occisum et vivum testati Martyres Agnum."
PAULINUS of Nola, *Poem.* xxiv. 215.

"THE noble army of martyrs praise thee: the holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee." In accordance with the spirit of these words, the Church has ever shown a disposition to distinguish in a peculiar manner those who have shed their blood in defence of the faith. The honour paid to them in different times and places has varied, according to the genius of the age, and the amount of enthusiasm inherent in national character; but while truth is valued among men, it is impossible that they should be lightly esteemed, who, facing torments and death with resolution, purchased, not for themselves, but for others, the blessings of religious freedom. Notwithstanding the calumnies of enemies, and the inventions of mistaken friends, between which historical truth has materially suffered, it is certain that these soldiers of God have from time to time achieved the most glorious and permanent triumphs: in the great assaults made upon heathen-

ism or superstition, they have led the attack as the forlorn hope, and fallen victorious;

> "Strange conquest, where the conqueror must die,
> And he is slain that wins the victory;"

but in this they only shared the fate of their Master, a fate which might naturally be expected to await all His followers. What gratitude do we not owe to those who fought such fearful battles, to leave us in unhoped-for liberty and ease.

The merits of the martyrs can be appreciated by all mankind. The natural love of life, and the instinctive shrinking from pain belonging to our species, stamp a plain and intelligible value upon their tried valour. The consentient voice of the whole Church, registered in the canons of an œcumenical council, may be consigned to comparative oblivion: the arguments employed, or the ground of controversy itself, may be beyond the understanding of nine-tenths of the world; but torture and death speak a language universally understood. Accordingly we find the martyrs distinguished by posterity in a manner that casts into the shade the honours awarded to the heroes of secular history. What has been done for Leonidas or Camillus, for Regulus or for Julius Cæsar, in comparison with the monuments erected to St. Peter? Standing beside the high altar of his Basilica in Rome, we find it hard to believe that the stupendous object of our admiration is the mausoleum of a fisherman. Of the magnificent inscriptions raised to the great

and the fortunate of this world, the proudest must yield in pride to that which encircles the dome of St. Peter's. A conqueror of the habitable globe once wept at having reached the limits of his sway: for, vast as was his ambition, it conceived of no such trophy as the golden letters that stud the horizon of that sky-suspended vault, consigning the keys of heaven to one who ruled, at least by his successors, the empire of earth.*

But honours of a more substantial nature, and more after the desires of their own hearts, have been awarded to the martyrs: the approving testimony of God, and the profound esteem of all good men: their blood has been considered as the seed of the Church; and the value of truth has been often estimated by the sufferings of those who have defended it.

Some confusion has arisen from the ancient practice of applying the term martyrs to those, who, though imprisoned or even tortured, were not called upon to give up their lives for the faith. To these properly belongs the appellation of *confessors*. The sufferers of Lyons and Vienne refused to be called martyrs during their lifetime, "even though they had been tortured not once, nor twice, but often; and had been taken from

* "Thou art Peter; and on this rock will I build my church: and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The length of the inscription is 440 feet: its elevation above the ground 200: and the height of the letters composing it is six feet.

the wild beasts, and committed again to prison; although they had the marks of fire and the scars of stripes and wounds all over their bodies." The epistle from which this account is taken, adds, that they restricted the appellation to "Christ the faithful and true witness" (or martyr), and to such as had sealed their testimony with their blood. "We," said they, "are mean and humble confessors." The modesty of the Gallic martyrs in the second century is the more to be commended, as an opposite feeling was afterwards visible in some of those who were imprisoned for their religion: perhaps we may attribute this weakness to the immoderate honours paid to them.*

It is a question not easy of solution, what first induced the Romans to persecute so violently the Christian sect. The attributing to their agency the conflagration of Rome, was obviously a mere pretext for punishing them: the accusation was not generally believed at the time, and the extreme severity of their tortures produced a strong feeling in their favour. When we review the small portion of the history of the Church contained in the New Testament, from the time when Pilate washed his hands of our Saviour's blood, to the rescue of St. Paul from the Jews by the chief captain Lysias, we find in almost every instance in which the Christians came in contact with the Romans, that the latter appeared as their just, though often luke-

* Such confessors as had shed blood in their tortures were called *floridi* and *rubri* (florid, and red, confessors).

warm, protectors. The Roman deputy Gallio seems to have been actuated by secret favour towards the Christians; for when St. Paul was brought before him by the Jews, Gallio refused to listen to their accusations, and cleared the court of the tumultuous informers. In revenge for the interference of the Hebrews, the Greeks, many of whom had been converted by the Apostle's preaching, took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him publicly before the tribunal; meeting with no opposition from Gallio, who, not content with protecting a Christian, connived at the ill-usage of a Jew.*

When Festus left Paul bound, it was to do the Jews a pleasure: when Paul appealed to Cæsar, it was to escape their malignity. It was a Roman who thought it unreasonable to send a Christian prisoner without a crime imputed to him: a Roman, who, appreciating the eloquence and truth of the Apostle, trembled before his preaching. It may, therefore, excite our surprise to find this equitable policy exchanged for the spirit of extermination which afterwards appeared among the Heathen: nor can we accuse the genius of Christianity of any change for the worse, which could render it an object of reasonable aversion to its enemies. A probable cause of this hatred is found

* The motives of Gallio are not quite obvious: perhaps the punishment inflicted on Sosthenes was usual in the case of an accusation judged to be frivolous and vexatious: or the Jews may have been unpopular at Corinth.

by Milman, in the behaviour of the Christians during the burning of Rome, as their expectation of Christ's coming might lead them to rejoice in the flaming scenes which appeared to be its precursors. But, allowing all possible weight to this supposition, it does not explain the subsequent ill-treatment of the Church, after the repeated injunctions to the contrary contained in the Imperial rescripts.

What seems to have excited the anger of the Roman authorities was the proselytising disposition of the new sect, and their aggressions upon the Pagan religion. The principles of toleration which induced the Romans to allow the free use of hereditary rites and creeds to the nations which they conquered, were not applicable to persons who had apostatised from the polytheism in which they were born. To quit this with disgust, and to turn round upon its supporters with vehement indignation, was to commit an offence very different from that of the Jew, who, continuing in quiet adherence to the religion of his fathers, in no way disturbed the tranquillity of the empire.

A distinction must be made between the penalties legally inflicted on the Christians, and the irregular outbreaks of popular violence by which they suffered; as well as between the general tenor of the laws regarding them, and the particular edicts authorising persecutions. It would appear that Pliny, when promoted to the governorship of Bithynia, could find no laws or precedents concerning the

treatment of the Christians*; so that up to the year 106 A.D., no edicts against them were in force: from which we may infer that the laws of Domitian and Nero had been repealed, a good office which history ascribes to the humane Nerva. The edicts generally required a fair and open accusation of the supposed Christian, which would subject the informer, if successful, to disgrace among his fellow citizens, and if unsuccessful, to the severe penalties provided for such cases. On this point history is clear: and we possess decisive proofs of the just intentions of some emperors. "If the people of your province (writes Adrian to Minucius Fundanus) think that they can accuse the Christians in a court of law, let them do so according to law; but let there be no place for clamours and tumults. It is your part to take cognizance of the affair; and if the Christians appear to have done any thing illegal, punish that, and suit the penalty to the offence. And, by Hercules, if any one descends to accusation for mere calumny, let him also feel the full weight of your displeasure."

Historians, as might naturally be expected, have in general expatiated upon the times of trouble to the Church, and passed over lightly those of tranquillity. With the name of Diocletian, we associate the recollection of the most fearful scenes: the barbarities of the Thebaid, the horrors of the Peristephanon; yet for nineteen years of his reign,

* Pliny's Epistles, Book x. 97.

from A.D. 284 to 303, the peace of the Church was unbroken; and so much was discipline relaxed in consequence, that Eusebius laments its state, and considers the persecution that followed as necessary to restore purity, and a spirit of self-denial. Nor did all the heathen emperors manifest a positive aversion to Christianity: the Pagan historian, Lampridius, has preserved a remarkable example of moderation in Alexander Severus: "When the Christians," he relates, "had taken possession of a certain place, which had till then been open to the public, and the Popinarii (or tavern keepers) laid claim to it, the Emperor decreed that it was better that God should be worshipped there in any manner, than that it should be given up to such occupants.* Another instance may be given. Aurelian, when consulted by the oriental bishops concerning the deposition of Paul of Samosata, referred the cause to the Italian clergy, and finally permitted the execution of their sentence against the dissolute prelate of Antioch. (Eusebius.)

The actual extent and severity of the Pagan persecutions, a point much debated among writers, is best ascertained by examining the testimony of authors not professing to treat specially of martyrs, such as Pagan historians, the fathers, and, after the time of Constantine, ecclesiastical historians. It is worthy of remark, that in all the inspired records of martyrdom, the mode of execution is described as

* In vitâ Alexandri Severi. cap. 49.

that usually employed at the time: the scourge and cross were a common punishment with the Romans; and the stoning of Stephen was an act of supposed obedience to the law of Moses. In this circumstance, as we shall presently see, they contrast strongly with some of the later histories, which represent magistrates, otherwise humane, as inventing every refinement of cruelty expressly for the torture of the Christians.

Pagan writers, while they generally pass over with contempt the Christian sect, have not omitted to notice the dreadful calamities which they suffered under Nero. According to Tacitus, a vast multitude were sacrificed in that first persecution; and both Juvenal and Martial refer to the particular mode of destroying them adopted by the sanguinary Emperor. Succeeding writers allude to the persecutions that followed; and their observations, collected and compared, furnished materials for a controversy on the number of martyrs, warmly agitated in the last two centuries. Up to that time, all parties had agreed in receiving the Romanist martyrologies as genuine: the first who ventured to oppose the established opinion being the learned Henry Dodwell, author of a treatise intitled, "On the Paucity of Martyrs." He argues that Origen acknowledged very few martyrs before his own time; that is, the middle of the third century, and long before the Diocletian persecution: that few of the emperors persecuted the Church: that their rescripts prevented as much as possible, both the

popular tumults and the injustice of the provincial governors: that some emperors were friends and protectors of the Christians, and that others, though not friendly, were far from being violently opposed to them. He does not omit to notice the saying of St. Ambrose, "I know that many of the Gentiles are accustomed to boast, that they have brought back the axe bloodless from their provincial administration." "It is also," continues Dodwell, "scarcely credible, that princes and their officers, who, though persecutors, were in other respects good men, should have been so inhuman, so athirst for the blood of the innocent, as some fable-mongers have represented." *

The treatment of the martyrs appears to have depended in great measure upon the individual character of their judges. In the case of Cyprian, suitable respect was paid to his rank, and a direct act of disobedience proved, before the capital sentence was reluctantly pronounced. In the matter of those accused under Trajan, the imperial edict contained the inconsistency of directing Pliny to put to death the Christians brought to him, but in no case to seek for them; whereas in the massacres under Diocletian, no attempt was made to justify their punishment by convicting them of crime.

The injustice and cruelty of some persecutors, as well as the character of the proceedings instituted by them, are vividly described in the Apology of Tertullian. But after making allowance for the

* De Paucitate Martyrum.

declamatory style of that author, it is obvious, that notwithstanding the unfair methods of conviction resorted to by the Pagans, there existed among them some sense of justice towards the Christians, to which the appeal of the African Father was directed. The followers of Jesus, he complains, were not placed upon the same footing as other criminals, with regard to the means of defending themselves. They were not permitted to answer for themselves, a privilege allowed to every other class of offenders. Nor was their crime properly investigated, but their name alone, when confessed, was reckoned sufficient ground of condemnation. "In other cases," he continues, "you expect full evidence and proof of the details, you must be put in possession of the time and place, the accomplices and manner of the deed. With us, no such forms are observed: whereas you should examine your prisoner as to the number of infants of which he has partaken*, the Œdipodean banquets in which he has joined: what cooks, what dogs were present. In the case of a murderer, you torture him to make him confess; we, on the other hand, are tortured to force us to deny our crime, that is, our name. A man says, 'I am a Christian;' still he is tortured: if he is punished for confessing the truth, how would you treat him had he told you a falsehood? Again, you are reluctant to believe a common criminal when he denies his offence, yet you believe us instantly

* Tertullian here alludes to the usual charge brought against the Christians.

when we deny ours. You suppose a Christian to be a man guilty of every description of crime, yet on his denying, or abandoning the name, you forgive him freely. This is not law. Is it then a mere contention about a name? It would seem so, since you judge us for none of the vices imputed to us."

The apologist, having thus dexterously exposed the injustice of the Pagans, proceeds to draw, from their customary way of speaking, an argument in favour of the moral character of the Christians. "'A good man that Caius Seius,' says one, 'though a Christian'—'I wonder so wise a man as Lucius has joined them,' says another: but no one thinks of saying, 'so good, so wise, because a Christian,' or, 'a Christian, because so good and wise.' Again, another is thus spoken of: 'That woman, once so wanton, so agreeable, (quam lasciva, quam festiva)' or 'that youth, so seductive, so gallant — but now they have become Christians:' meaning to say, now they have reformed. But why should reformation of character under that name offend you?

"Who, I would ask, first began to punish us? Nero. Nothing but what was excellent was ever condemned by him: Domitian, too, his fit successor. These you yourselves condemn, and are accustomed to make good the injuries which they inflicted. But no Adrian or Vespasian, no Pius or Verus, has issued edicts against us.

"You think us traitors for refusing to sacrifice to Cæsar, yet in devotion to him we far exceed you.

For him we supplicate the true, the living, the eternal God. With hands extended because pure, with heads uncovered because not ashamed, without a prompter because from the heart, we ask long life and every other blessing for him: such things I can ask only where I know they can be obtained. We do not offer, like you, a pennyworth of incense, a few tears of the Arabian tree, two drops of wine, or the blood of some superannuated bullock awaiting its death *: and withal so foul a conscience, that I wonder the priests do not rather inspect the entrails of the offerers than those of the victims. Then, while we stand praying before our God, let the ungulæ tear us, the crosses bear our weight; let the flames envelope us, the sword divide our throats, the beasts spring upon us; the very posture of a praying Christian is a preparation for every kind of punishment.† Do this, loyal judges, torture the person that prays to God for the Emperor; this will be a crime, when truth and piety are illegal.

"You take it for granted that the Christians are the cause of all the evils that befal the nation. If the Tiber overflows, or the Nile does not; if drought

* This statement sadly dispels the charm of the heathen ceremonial. The libations and sacrifices of the ancients might be supposed, from the account of classic authors, to have been costly, if not magnificent. The victims, by law, should have been unblemished, and never yoked to the plough.

† The apologist refers to the custom of praying standing, with hands outstretched in the form of a cross. Criminals were often bound in the same position before undergoing punishm-

or earthquakes, famine or pestilence befal us, then we hear immediately, 'The Christians to the lion.' But, I pray you, did no misfortunes occur to the city before the time of Tiberius? What god was worshipped among you when Hannibal measured by the bushel the rings taken at Cannæ? or when the Senonian Gauls filled the Capitol?

"What testimony do you not bear us in this, that you rather condemn a Christian *ad lenonem* than *ad leonem;* you suppose that we fear sin more than death. Crucify, torture, condemn us: this harvest is our increase: our seed is the blood of Christians."

In such indignant and scornful terms does the champion of Christianity defend his cause, not fearing to attack the religion of the state. Yet we find him escaping with impunity, as well as most of his contemporaries: indeed it has been often remarked, that many of the bishops, exposed as their situation was, held office during the reign of several successive emperors. The deacon Pontius declares that Cyprian was the first African bishop who had obtained the crown of martyrdom. In his epistle to the governor Scapula, Tertullian quotes instances in which the Pagans had protected the Christians: he specifies Cincius, Severus, Candidus, and Asper, who had favoured their escape; Pudens, who had refused to try one of them without an accuser; and Severus, father of Antonine, who "understanding that certain illustrious men and women were of that sect, not only dismissed

them unhurt, but bore honourable testimony to them, and restored them safely to their friends in the face of a raging populace."

The writings of Tertullian were composed about the year 200, when the space of time over which the Pagan persecutions extended was only half elapsed: it is possible that at that period the Roman government, less corrupt and enfeebled than afterwards, maintained the principles of justice against the mob, with more firmness than towards the time of the Diocletian persecution: certainly, that last desperate attempt to eradicate Christianity was the most vigorous, perhaps in exact proportion to the prevailing terrors of the Heathen regarding its final triumph.

It is not difficult for us to enter into the feelings of the Pagans, so far as to imagine the apprehensions with which they must have looked forward to the ultimate issue of the conflict. At the close of the second century, the members of the new sect were less formidable from their numbers and station, than from their irresistible valour. Carrying in their hand the life they valued so cheaply, the martyrs lavishly exchanged it for the treasures of eternal glory; but besides this, in itself an abundant recompence, they bought over the hearts of men. With such a price, they seduced the world into imitation of their virtues: the same violence that took heaven by force (to apply an expression after the manner of that time), prevailed over earth, and vanquished hell. Nothing could

have been devised better adapted to display the beauties of the new faith, than submitting its professors to martyrdom: not proof against the generous enthusiasm of his victim, the executioner often caught the flame: gazed upon the dangerous spectacle of the power of true religion, till his heart burnt within him: and, fairly overwhelmed by the triumph of faith and hope, hastened to undergo the death which his hands had inflicted on another. It was perhaps the frequent experience of this which led many of the Pagan officers to avoid the capital punishment of the Christians, and to employ the more efficacious method of bribes and entreaties.

There was, moreover, a spirit of combination among the Christians, an earnest energy, and a desire to extend their Master's kingdom at any risk to themselves, that must have suggested gloomy forebodings to the more thoughtful worshippers of Jupiter. There was, undoubtedly, a falling-off in the devotion of the Pagans, independent of the injuries inflicted on their religion by Christianity; a deistical philosophy was gradually taking the place of polytheism; yet the vigour of the persecutions shows that the new doctrine was by no means looked upon with indifference, nor did the world tamely allow itself to be surprised into Christianity. Because a rationalist emperor placed together in his palace, the statues of Orpheus, Abraham, Christ, and Apollonius, and because a few of the more learned heathen delighted in the

same eclectic worship; we are not to infer with Gibbon, that indifference gave the death-blow to Paganism, and that Christianity only stepped in to enjoy the triumph. For one martyr to the unity of God among the Pagans,—for one Socrates, how many might be numbered among the followers of Jesus: to those who bled in the cause, let us ascribe the honours of the victory.

It is related of one of the Antonines, by Eunapius, that he was in the habit of declaring publicly, that before long all the temples would be converted into sepulchres. From the well-known connection between cemeteries and places of worship among the Christians, it is clear that the imperial statesman foresaw the future ascendency of our religion.

The number of lapsed persons existing in the Church during the later persecutions, while it marks a declension from primitive constancy, also shows the severity of the trial to which they had been subjected. In these times we can scarcely realise the miserable condition of those, who having apostatised under persecution, were waiting to be restored to the church. Such a person was forced to do penance under the open sky for years, or even for life: with some sects, as with the Novatians, no sufferings could expiate the insult to the Church, and no sacrifice remained in heaven to wash away the boundless guilt. By the more lenient of his fellow Christians, he was regarded as a moral suicide; a wretched shadow of himself, who survived his own decease, and existed but to perform the funeral solemnities

for his defunct soul. "If you had lost a friend," asks Cyprian of such a one, "a friend who was dear to you, you would lament the sad misfortune; you have now lost your soul, and are to all spiritual purpose dead. * * * * You went to the altar, yourself the victim,—yourself the sacrifice: there did you offer up your salvation, your hope, your faith; consuming them in those fatal fires." So hard was the lot of the repentant lapsed, that even in a temporal point of view, it would have been better for them to have ended their lives by glorious death, than to endure the years of shame and misery which awaited them: how great then must have been the horrors which could outweigh both that disgrace and the prospect of eternal ruin!

Professed martyrologists have obtained their materials almost exclusively from the separate treatises entitled Acts of the Martyrs; a series of compositions generally extravagant in style, and of doubtful authenticity. Some of them are translated in the first volume of Foxe's Acts and Monuments, as well as in Fleury's Ecclesiastical History: but the best collection of them is that of Ruinart, contained in one folio volume.* Of these histories, a few, such as those of Cyprian, Ignatius, and Polycarp, are told in a simple and dignified manner; an observation scarcely applicable in any degree to the rest.

On examining such a narrative as the Acts of

* Acta sincera et selecta Sanctorum Martyrum.

Tarachus and Probus, one of those published by Ruinart, we cannot fail to be struck by its highly unnatural and improbable character. A condensed enumeration of tortures, varied only by the repartees of the sufferer, may for a few lines excite our horror; but when continued through many pages, imagination refuses to grant such powers of endurance to frail humanity. A difficulty meets us at the outset: these "Acts" are given as an official report of the trials, entered in the Roman records, and privately obtained for the Christians by Sabastus, an archer on duty at the time. Yet their style betrays a Christian author, for they contain abundance of speeches attributed to the martyrs, related in Christian language. Indeed, the chief point of the narrative is made to lie in these speeches, generally highly figurative, and the mistakes of the Pagans arising from a too literal interpretation of them. Happily for the reader, his attention is continually diverted from the mutilation of the martyrs, to their successful wit-combats with their judge. "Rub him with salt," exclaims the governor; "Salt me more, that I may be incorruptible," replies Tarachus. When taunted by Maximus with his blindness, he returns the reproach, and boasts of superior inward vision. He professes to be armed from head to foot, clothed in divine panoply: Maximus, who only sees his naked body one undistinguishable wound, is necessarily puzzled by the assertion, and has recourse to fresh barbarities to maintain his credit. Lastly, Maximus

dismisses him, promising to think over some fresh tortures for their next meeting.*

In such narratives, the language put into the mouths of the martyrs is not always to be justified on Christian principles. Nor should the degree of provocation received by them be admitted as an excuse, for they are represented as perfectly ununmoved, capable of arguing with precision, and annoying their tormentors with well-directed sarcasm. Unsuitably enough occurs the following passage in the Acts of Boniface. "The holy martyr said to him, 'Be dumb, wretch; and open not thy mouth against my Lord Jesus Christ. O serpent of darkest mind, ancient of evil days, a curse upon thee." In the second hymn of the Peristephanon, St. Vincent is made to remind Datianus of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrha, and to assure him of the certainty of his obtaining the same sulphureous portion in the lowest hell: —

"Vides favillas indices
Gomorreorum criminum;
Sodomita nec latet cinis,
Testis perennis funeris.
Exemplar hoc, Serpens, tuum est,
Fuligo quem mox sulphuris
Bitumen et mixtum pice
Imo implicabunt Tartaro."

* These acts of Tarachus contain strong marks of forgery. The martyrs are declared to have suffered in the first consulate of Diocletian, that is, in the year 284: whereas the Diocletian persecution did not begin till 303, after an interval of fifty years' peace. The prefect is also made to quote the "Acts of Pilate," which are known to have been invented by Maximin, certainly not earlier than 303. (Eusebius, Hist. Eccles.)

In these ill-concocted tales, every principle of probability is violated; between them and the authentic records of martyrdom there exists not the slightest analogy. Are we to suppose that God, who gave the martyrs grace to suffer gloriously in His cause, should have left them to disgrace that cause by a vain bravado, or abusive retorts? And if the appearance of insensibility to pain is to be considered a test, these stoical confessors must be allowed infinitely to exceed St. Paul in fortitude: compared with his plea of citizenship, adduced to escape torture, their eager demand for more horrible inflictions must indicate vastly higher attainments in faith and piety. The physical effects of the tortures are never taken into account in the later "Acts:" there is no collapse or prostration of strength, no swooning from profuse bloodshed. We must either suppose that a miraculous agency had throughout averted the usual effects of mutilation, or that the entire narrative is grossly exaggerated. Generally speaking, the only sufferer is the judge: he it is who rolls his eyes in frenzy, and gnashes his teeth with vexation*; while the martyr finds vinegar mild, and salt without pungency; mistakes mustard for honey, and claps his blood-stained hands as the ungula rends his limbs.

* "His persecutor saucius
Pallet, rubescit, æstuat
Insana torquens lumina
Spumasque frendens egerit."
Peristephanon, Hymn 2.

If we cannot allow as a genuine offspring of Christianity the spirit that attributed fierce words and a proud stoicism to the martyrs, still less can we admit to the same honour the mad rage for martyrdom that is said to have possessed some of the younger believers. In the year 372 the Council of Elvira found it necessary to refuse the honours of martyrdom to those who were killed in breaking idols, on the ground that such a proceeding was neither commanded in the Bible, nor sanctioned by Apostolic example. In narrating the story of Eulalia, Prudentius highly approves of her bold and insulting bearing towards the Pagan authorities. That young lady, according to the poet, had from the cradle given promise of a fierce and unsociable disposition, calculated to distinguish her in the religious world then existing. On the outbreak of persecution, she was removed to the country by her heathen parents, and even shut up to prevent any collision with the authorities. On a dark and silent night she escaped from her home, and, guided by angelic torch-bearers, made her way into the city. Early in the morning she presents herself at the tribunal and vehemently abuses the emperor and his gods. She earnestly requests that her bodily frame may be torn to pieces, as a thing useless in itself, and unworthy the trouble of preserving. Provoked by her language, the prætor orders the lictors to bind her; but, before inflicting punishment, he sets before her the miseries which she draws upon herself and her parents, the pro-

spects of happiness which her home offers, and the speedy marriage which awaits her. A grain of incense cast upon the coals is to be the sign of her recantation. To this she vouchsafes no verbal answer; but spits in the face of the prætor, throws down the images, and kicks over the thurible. The two executioners immediately perform their office by tearing with the ungula her sides and bosom. In the gashes inflicted by the instrument, her excited imagination traces the letters of her Master's name; and her voice, unshaken by sob or sigh, joyfully proclaims His triumph.* Torches are afterwards placed under her face; and this gives her an opportunity of ending her life by inhaling the flames of her burning hair.

The earliest and principal metrical writer upon martyrdom is Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, a native of Saragossa; a lawyer, and afterwards consul. He flourished in the middle and end of the fourth century: his work on the subject is intitled Peristephanon, or "Concerning the crowns:" being a collection of fourteen hymns in honour of different martyrs. Of these, the hymn to Romanus, being the most finished, may be taken as a sample.

* "Nec mora, carnefices gemini
Juncea pectora dilacerant;
Et latus ungula virgineum
Pulsat utrimque, et ad ossa secat,
Eulaliâ numerante notas.
Scriberis ecce! mihi Domine;
Quàm juvat hos apices legere."
Peristephanon, Hymn 9.

The history of the sufferings of Romanus, a martyr of A.D. 303, in the Diocletian persecution, is a poem of 1140 lines. The speeches of the hero, though grandiloquent, and often out of place, contain much that is striking; and constitute a somewhat powerful apology for Christianity. After the execution of the sentence —

> Tundatur, inquit, tergum, crebris ictibus
> Plumboque cervix verberata extuberet;

the martyr, nothing overwhelmed by the hailstorm of the leaden scourges (pulsatus illâ grandine), but retaining both sense and speech, addresses Asclepiades in an oration of 270 lines, enumerating all the crimes attributed to the heathen deities. The judge, who had suffered him to proceed so far without interruption, roused at length by the oft-repeated question, "Would you have me worship such a god?" attempts a reply: he argues that Rome had obtained her present glory under the patronage of Jupiter Stator; and that it would be ungrateful to leave the worship of the eternal gods who presided over the building of the city, for a novelty, just called into existence; and after a thousand consulates had rolled away, to embrace this new Christian dogma. The flesh is now cut from the bones of Romanus, while he carries on a comparison between the pains he endures, and those attendant upon sickness. "The ungulæ tearing the sides," he observes, "give no pang so sharp as those of pleurisy: the red-hot plates are less scorching than the heat of fever; nor are my

swelled and tortured limbs more painful than those of persons suffering from gout." His constancy is next put to the proof by fearful mutilations, after which he delivers an harangue on the cross and the plan of redemption; then adducing the command not to cast pearls before swine, he professes his intention of remaining silent for the future. He adds, however, that if the judge will fix upon any child of seven years old or under, he will pledge himself to follow whatever that infant may declare to be the truth. Acting upon this suggestion, the president seizes an infant in the crowd, and after obtaining from it a confession of Christianity, orders it to be scourged.

In this scene, the severity of the punishment, its effect upon the bystanders, the weeping executioners, but, most of all, the inhuman conduct of the mother of the child, in reproving it for begging of her a cup of water, and referring it to a long list of Scripture martyrs by way of consolation, have afforded Prudentius abundant scope for the horrible descriptions in which he delights: —

"Vix hæc profatus, pusionem præcipit
Sublime tollant, et manu pulsent nates;
Mox et remotâ veste virgis verberent,
Tenerumque ductis ictibus tergum secent,
Plus unde lactis, quàm cruoris defluat.
Impacta quotiens corpus attigerat salix,
Tenui rubebant sanguine uda vimina
Quem plaga flerat roscidis livoribus.
* * * *
At sola mater hisce lamentis caret,
Soli sereno frons renidet gaudio."

The child, though exhausted by loss of blood, revives and smiles; and during its decapitation, which soon follows, the mother is employed in singing the versicle, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."* The torturing of Romanus now proceeds with redoubled vigour, and after several miracles, only serving to provoke Asclepiades, and prolong the sufferings of the martyr, he is despatched by strangling.

The writers who flourished soon after the time of Constantine vied with one another in elaborating highly-coloured descriptions of the horrors of martyrdom. Prudentius being the first of those who wrote in metre, we cannot always say, in poetry, brought out the whole subject with fresh embellishments, and was greatly admired by his contemporaries and successors. "The torments which Prudentius admirably describes," remarks Ruinart, in reference to the sufferings of Romanus. His merits as a poet we shall have occasion to discuss afterwards; at present we are only concerned with the question of his historical fidelity. The hymn just quoted is sufficient to shake our belief in him as a martyrologist: without reckoning the miracles, the whole story is a string of improbabilities: the martyr is represented as betraying an

* The poet has found a worthy commentator in Fabricius, who has the following note: "The mother is tempted by the complaining of her child, but persists in her exalted resolution. * * * She refuses a little water to his thirst, and directs him to Christ as a fountain." Foxe takes the same view of her conduct.

infant to certain destruction: the mother displays a want of feeling scarcely credible, and altogether odious: and the infant itself, though lately weaned, exhibits the understanding and resolution of mature age. The profusion of useless miracles answers no end, and is supported by no evidence: indeed, the existence of miraculous adjuncts to martyrdom must be generally doubtful, from the difficulty of obtaining dispassionate testimony regarding them. It is not from a highly excited crowd of spectators earnestly watching for some supernatural interposition, and ready to magnify any event that appeared strange or unusual: it is not from such, still less from those who have only listened to *their* descriptions, that satisfactory proof of miraculous occurrences can be obtained. There are, moreover, strong objections in the nature of these miracles: that God should deliver His servants from their enemies, or support them miraculously under torments, is perfectly in accordance with the tenor of the inspired records: but reason is staggered by the futility of the many prodigies described in connection with the later martyrdoms. Romanus having had his face completely cut to pieces, and being still enabled to speak distinctly, derives no relief from the supernatural aid: he is next delivered to another executioner, who cuts out his tongue. After the second mutilation, the martyr, silenced perforce, having no voice to send heavenward, no words with which to proclaim his Master's triumph, draws from his inmost heart a long sigh,

and supplicating with a groan, breaks forth: "Who speaks of Christ, never yet wanted a tongue: nor ask by what organ words are formed, when the Giver of words is the subject of speech." Yet no conversion of the bystanders ensues; nor does any effect follow the miracles, excepting that of exasperating the judge. The same want of result is observable in most of the prodigies related by Prudentius.

Perhaps we shall not be wrong in ascribing the character of these stories, and even their existence, to the excited state of feeling which prevailed when they were written. Their general tendency is to make us believe that the martyrs suffered no pain, and had therefore little merit in facing the torments prepared for them: while they exhibit the victim and his executioner as two combatants ("hinc martyr, illinc carnifex," as Prudentius has it): the one backed by miracles, and supported by insensibility to pain; the other armed with the most fearful implements that human or diabolical cruelty could invent. In this novel species of single combat, in which high words were not wanting on either side, the Pagan was invariably worsted. For in his own dissolving powers the martyr saw the pledge of victory; and the failure of pain to shake his constancy was a deep disgrace to his foe. Unfettered by the "nec Deus intersit" of the profane, the poet liberally introduced the agents of heavenly or hellish power: if there was no group of Oceanides to console the Christian Prometheus,

there was a chorus of angels to sing around him; to scatter flowers on his couch, and to fill the air with odours. The invisible Coryphœus invites him to heaven, and promises an eternal crown: — "Arise, illustrious martyr, secure of thy reward: arise, and join our company. — O warrior most invincible, braver than the bravest, thy tortures, cruel as they are, fear thee their conqueror."*

Early in the history of persecution, we find Celsus reproaching the Christians with the example of the heathen Anaxarchus, who, being pounded in a mortar, exclaimed, "Pound the shell of Anaxarchus, himself you touch not." "What," he asks, "did your Deity say in his sufferings comparable to this?"† Not to be outdone by a Pagan, martyrologists took care to record the fact, that Christians also could maintain composure under the greatest tortures: in course of time their hyperbolical language rather represented the martyrs as devoid of feeling than resolute in enduring pain. In what might be a Christianised version of the speech of Anaxarchus, Prudentius makes his hero explain the principle of his fortitude:—

"Tear as you will, this mangled frame,
Prone to mortality;
But think not, man of blood, to tame
Or take revenge on me.
You overlook, in thus supposing,
The nobler self that dwells within;
Throughout these cruel scenes reposing,
Where nought that injures enters in.

* Peristephanon, Hymn 2. † Origen in Celsum.

This, which you labour to destroy
With so much madness, so much rage,
Is but a vessel form'd of clay,
Brittle, and hasting to decay.
Let nobler foes your arms employ;
Subdue the indomitable soul;
Which, when fierce whirlwinds rend the sky,
Looks on in calm security.
And only bows to God's control." *

In reply to the taunt of Celsus, concerning the superior fortitude of Epictetus and Anaxarchus, Origen remarks that a pious submission to the will of God, or even a prayer, such as, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," is more truly magnanimous than the affectation of insensibility, so lauded in the Pagan sufferers.

When the early Christian writers are charged with exaggeration, and even invention of facts, it must be remembered that the forgery of documents in support of their creed was not altogether unknown among them. The Sibylline interpolations

* "Erras cruente, si meam
Te rere pœnam sumere,
Quùm membra morti obnoxia
Dilancinata interficis.
Est alter, est intrinsecus,
Violare quem nullus potest,
Liber, quietus, integer,
Exsors dolorum tristium.
Hoc, quod laboras perdere
Tantis furoris viribus,
Vas est solutum ac fictile,
Quocumque frangendum modo."

The entire passage is imitated from Cyprian's tract to Demetrian, cap. 8. "Another will suffer in me," said the humble Felicitas, 180 years earlier.

are too notorious to leave any doubt on the subject. A specimen of those productions, and of the manner of employing them, occurs in the works of Lactantius. After describing the miracle of feeding five thousand, he exclaims, "What can be said or done more astonishing? But it was long ago predicted by the Sibyl, whose verses run thus: —

Εἰν ἄρτοις ἅμα πέντε καὶ ἰχθύεσσι δοιοισιν,
Ἀνδρῶν χιλιάδας ἐν ἐρήμῳ πέντε κορέσσει,
Καὶ τὰ περισσεύοντα λαβὼν μετὰ κλάσματα πάντα,
Δώδεκα πληρώσει κοφίνους εἰς ἐλπίδα πολλῶν. *

"With five loaves, together with two fishes,
He will satisfy five thousand men in the desert:
Then gathering up the fragments which remain,
He will fill twelve baskets for the assurance of many."

From having quoted these fictitious works of the Sibyl in proof of their religion, the Christians early obtained the name of *Sibyllists*. "You have daringly," said Celsus, "inserted many abusive passages among her verses." Origen complains that Celsus did not specify the interpolations, nor produce old copies of the original writings. It is to be feared that Celsus might have easily supported his charge. The name of Orpheus had also been borrowed: his writings, evidently fictitious, were circulated in the Church. The first converts long retained a prepossession in favour of Orpheus, whom they considered to be a type of our Lord, by the sweetness of his preaching drawing all men after him.

* De Jesu Vitâ et Miraculis.

In the 63d canon of the Quinisextan council, held A.D. 706, it was ordained, "That whereas certain false stories of martyrdom have been circulated by the enemies of truth, calculated to bring the martyrs into discredit, and drive the hearers of such things into infidelity: we decree that they be not read in the churches, but be committed to the flames." We are left in uncertainty as to the real character of the pseudo-martyrologies referred to by the canon: that they were read in churches, leads to the supposition that they were the production of Christian writers, who, by their unlimited indulgence in the license of the times, had alarmed even a council of the eighth century. Yet the severe expressions of the Quinisextan divines, "falso confictæ, * * * ut martyres Dei ignominiâ afficerent," seem to be pointed against intentional traducers.

In the council held at Carthage, A.D. 401, it was ordered that all false martyr churches, and unauthenticated relics, should be destroyed: that none should be enrolled as martyrs without sufficient proof: and that all altars consecrated upon the authority of dreams, and on other superstitious grounds, should be disavowed. The necessity for having some relic of a martyr as a palladium to a church, was not felt generally till the fifth century: the follies to which it led, and the frauds resorted to in order to convince the people of the sanctity of particular bones and dust, are aimed at in this canon.

A work making considerable pretensions to learning and accuracy, is the small quarto of Gallonius, entitled "De Cruciatibus Martyrum," with plates. The ignorance of this writer concerning the power of human nature to support mutilation*, is even surpassed by his credulous eagerness to enumerate the accumulated horrors invented by the monkish historians, who, in their dismal seclusion, allowed full license to a morbid imagination. For Gallonius to state simply that the martyrs were suspended in various painful attitudes, would be insufficient for his purpose: sixteen varieties of hanging have been specified by him; and, to the dismay of the reader, the whole sixteen appear in engravings. The same principle of amplification runs throughout the work: lest we should think lightly of the pains of being burnt alive, if conveyed by mere verbal description, not less than nineteen modifications of this torture are figured and explained in the margin. All that lies between a slight historical mention of the details of martyrdom and the drawings of Gallonius, is mere invention. We are told by ancient writers, that the *plumbatæ* were scourges loaded with lead; and, beyond that, we know nothing of them: also, that the scorpion was a knotted stick, as opposed to the *virgæ læves:* when,

* One of the sufferers has a row of large nails driven into his back: another is sitting up, alive, with the four limbs amputated and left to bleed. One plate represents a Christian whose liver is torn out: the opposite page adds in explanation that the Gentiles used to devour it; a statement which accounts for the fire and frying-pan in the foreground.

therefore, we are shown an engraving, fixing the size and shape of these instruments, we are imposed upon by the invention of the artist. To justify these engravings, there should be in existence authentic relics of the objects, or descriptions by contemporary writers: but no such relics or descriptions can be found.*

The collection of prints employed by Gallonius is also inserted in some other works, successive additions having been made from time to time. For instance, the supposed claw of an ungula, found in a cemetery, is published with due honour by its discoverer: another author, who has not seen the original, and is nevertheless better informed regarding it, adds to it a handle: a third puts it in its complete form into the hands of a ferocious executioner, and buries the points in the side of a Christian.

A favourite subject with martyrologists, and one not passed over by Gallonius, is the treatment to which the Christian virgins were exposed in the persecutions. Between the desire to magnify the

* Stories regarding martyrdom never lose by repetition. In the massacre of the Huguenots, it is often stated that 60,000 persons perished in Paris: whereas Bonanni declares officially, that 60,000 persons *were employed* in the slaughter, and that they destroyed 4000 of their enemies. (Numismata Romana, opposite the engraving of the medal.) Again, Ruinart says, that Domitius collected seven books of edicts remaining in force against the Christians: — Lactantius, from whom he professes to quote, mentions the edicts of the persecutors as contained in the *seventh book* of the laws collected by Domitius. (Institutiones, lib. 5. cap. 2).

indignities offered to them, and at the same time to exhibit them as coming off with undiminished honour, these writers are sorely perplexed. The usual custom is to introduce a miracle, by which the "spouses of Christ" are rescued from impending fate, which on some very rare occasions is admitted to have befallen them. Some of the latest histories of martyrdom are worked up into a complete romance, consisting of the adventures and escapes of the virgins from the perils to which they were exposed.

The story of Theodora is a curious specimen of these narratives, and has the advantage of being free from miraculous adjuncts. This virgin martyr, when informed that she must either sacrifice to the gods, or be publicly disgraced, answered—that "the will alone is what God regards." When at length condemned by the reluctant governor, she was led into the place of confinement, where she offered up a prayer for deliverance. The people standing round in a crowd, a Christian named Didymus, disguised as a heathen soldier, entered the cell; he quieted her apprehensions by declaring that he had come to save her; proposed to exchange dresses, and to let her pass out instead of him. Theodora adopted the suggestion, and escaped in safety, leaving her generous friend within. The next who entered discovered the change of the prisoner; but, unable to explain the mystery, attributed it to a miracle. The circumstance was soon reported to the governor, and Didymus sen-

tenced to execution. But Theodora, hearing of his apprehension, ran to the place of punishment, and hastened to dispute with him the crown of martyrdom. "I will not be guilty of your death," she exclaimed; "I consented that you should preserve my honour, but not my life. If you deprive me of the crown of martyrdom, you will have deceived me." The noble contention ended in the execution of both the Christians.

Several tales of this kind are to be found in the Ecclesiastical History of Nicephorus: perhaps the least improbable is the following:—A young lady of extraordinary beauty received the sentence described as common in the Diocletian persecution. To the first person who gained access to her, she represented herself as an enchantress, skilled in the knowledge of poisons and their antidotes: on condition of receiving no insult from him, she proposed to render him invulnerable to steel, by a preparation which she had discovered. "But you will of course," she added, "wish to see its efficacy proved before concluding the agreement." Immediately producing an ointment, she applied it to her neck, directing the youth to draw his sword, and use his utmost endeavours to inflict a wound. Whether deceived by her manner, or altogether unacquainted with the martyr-spirit of the time, he obeyed: nor was his knowledge of the true Christian character advanced, when he saw with horror the head of his victim rolling at his feet.*

* For another of these relations, rather curious and impro-

There is a certain intensity in stories of this kind, where every action appears in a strange light, allowing a wide range for the production of unnatural effect: vices here take the place of virtues, falsehood and suicide supplant truth and trust in God. This last virtue, the true foundation of martyr-glory, being omitted, the rest appear at variance: the harmony, deprived of its base, becomes inverted and discordant.

The learned and ingenious Lupi, an author much esteemed by Roman antiquarians, published, about the year 1753, a series of dissertations on subjects connected with the early Christians. The chapter on "Innocentius, Boy and Martyr," is a choice specimen of martyrological invention: it is headed by an engraving of the image of the saint, gaudily dressed, and laid upon an altar. "Possessing," says Lupi, "neither the acts of his martyrdom nor his epitaph, we cannot easily decide upon the manner of his death. An examination of his bones makes it probable that he died under the plumbatæ. It is thus argued, because one of the shoulder-blades of the glorious little Saint (Santino) was found broken, as if by the force of the leaden blows: besides which, several of the vertebræ and ribs are broken, as if by violence. The bone called by ana-

bable, see also Fleury, Hist. Eccles., livre 8. chap. 36. The seven martyrs were septuagenarians. Stories of this description all belong to the last persecution: the secret is easily explained: "Vixêre fortes ante Agamemnona multi,"—and like those unsung heroes, the virgin martyrs of earlier times had no poet.

tomists *sacrum* is also crumbled and separated from its great ischiatic processes."

The bones of this martyr, not yet seven years old, must have lain in the grave upwards of fourteen centuries, supposing him to have suffered in the last persecution. It cannot but surprise us to find the skeleton of a child, imperfectly ossified, and buried in a damp rocky cell, preserving any vestige of its original form*; nor is the ignorance of the discoverer less astonishing, in arguing from a slight decay which it had undergone, violence inflicted during life. Had the sacrum been still attached to the ischiatic processes, and had its spongy structure preserved its shape, the grave antiquarian might, with greater justice, have boasted the miraculous preservation of the relics. The reader may remember a drawing in the third chapter of this work, representing a little dust as the sole residue of a full-grown skeleton: there is, therefore, nothing remarkable in the fact, that the shoulder-blade and ribs of Innocentius have fallen into pieces. The sex of a skeleton of that age must always be doubtful: we are, therefore, unable to ascertain a single circumstance regarding this supposed martyr,— whether boy or girl, what his name, and whether or not he died a violent death, — all is matter of

* "On opening the graves of children at a period of six or seven years, the bodies have been found decomposed, not even the bones remaining; whilst the bodies of adults were but little affected." (Chadwick, Supplementary Report on Interment, 1843, p. 128.)

conjecture. Lupi seems to have felt the weakness of his cause, if we may judge from his having recourse to miraculous evidence: a lady who was moribund from loss of blood after the extraction of a tooth, was immediately recovered by a small portion of the ashes of the saint. She supped with her family on the evening of the same day.

From these apocryphal histories of saints and martyrs, we turn with pleasure to such writings as the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas, or the narrative of the Lyons persecutions; which bear the test of any fair criticism, and reflect immortal honour on the courage of the sufferers. Of these works few remain; perhaps, few were written: for in seasons of severe trial, opportunities of composing a history would seldom be afforded. Yet in some instances, time has preserved records, which, though not professedly descriptive of persecution, do, nevertheless, present us with a faithful picture of the events connected with it; which take us behind the scenes, and exhibit to our peaceful times, not the heroism of a race of spiritual demigods, but the trembling faith of weak mortals like ourselves, now fainting, now triumphing, and still oftener evading the trial from which flesh and blood have always shrunk.

The correspondence of Cyprian, including the letters addressed to him by the Roman clergy, contains the materials for a minute history of the Decian persecution at Carthage. In this collection of authentic documents, there is seen a mixture of weak-

ness with the courage of the martyrs, that may indeed diminish the unmingled lustre of their exploits, while the nature of their sufferings, better brought home to our feelings, excites in us increased sympathy. In almost the only piece of martyr-autobiography contained in it, we read—"I confessed the name of God with fear among the more timid *;" and throughout the narrative we shall find little resemblance to the unnatural stories of Romanus and Eulalia.

Early in the year 250, the Decian persecution broke out in Rome, and on the news arriving at Carthage, the people rose in a body, and demanded by name Cyprian, bishop of that city, to be thrown to the lions. On the repetition of the cry, Cyprian, with the concurrence of his clergy, retired to a place of safety, whence he continued by letter to superintend the affairs of his church, the emoluments of his office being lodged by him in the hands of Rogatianus, for the relief of the poor during his absence. His first care was to regulate the public services, so as to expose the believers as little as possible to popular rage. His advice was, that the clergy who administered the communion to confessors in prison †, should be constantly changed, and that no crowd should attend on the

* Lucian's answer to Celerinus. Cyprian's Epist. xxii.

† The practice of administering the communion to confessors almost every day of their imprisonment, was intended to strengthen their faith and courage against the time of their final suffering, which was unknown to them until they were called out to execution.

occasion, for fear of attracting notice. In this particular, he acted for others on the same principles of prudence and moderation which dictated his own flight.

When the news of Cyprian's retirement reached Rome, that is, immediately after the martyrdom of Fabian, bishop of that city, the Roman clergy took upon themselves, during the vacancy of their see, to write an anonymous letter of advice to the clergy of Carthage, whom they affected to consider deserted, and much needing their brotherly counsel. In this letter they made some very plain allusions to the conduct of "the blessed Pope Cyprian," as they style him, such as a reference to Peter following our Lord afar off; introducing the passage, "He that is an hireling and not the shepherd, seeth the wolf coming and fleeth." In this they enclosed another epistle, somewhat of the same character, to be forwarded to Cyprian. So far from deferring to their opinion, the Bishop of Carthage sent back their letter, requesting to be informed whether it was genuine.* Of this answer they took no notice, though they continued on friendly terms with their correspondent.

The proconsul's arrival at Carthage in the month of April greatly increased the fury of the persecution. The inferior local magistrates had no power of life and death, but only of imprisonment; the power of torturing was also limited to the

* The absence of signatures and address, probably omitted through fear of interception, gave a fair pretext for the doubt.

proconsul. The first company of confessors called before the tribunal acquitted themselves gloriously; some of them, covered with wounds, were remanded till the following day; others, exhausted with loss of blood, breathed their last, and obtained at once the long-desired crown. "To-morrow," exclaimed Mappalicus from the rack, "to-morrow you shall see a struggle." He was as good as his word, for the next day he resisted to death, before a host of witnesses. Fortunata and twelve others were starved to death, and some were long confined in dungeons filled with smoke or heated air.

The proconsul at length quitted Carthage, leaving in prison a number of confessors, several of whom died there, and were admitted to the honours of martyrdom. Many also remained in banishment, and of these a few returned before their time, for which they were reproved by Cyprian, as they were now liable to be brought before the courts, not as Christians, but as criminals. Others gave occasion for scandal, in a manner deeply lamented by their bishop, and so cast upon the manners of the primitive Church a reproach not yet forgotten by the infidel. All this time the number of the lapsed had been increasing, and now amounted to thousands. This immense body fixed upon the remaining confessors as their intercessors with the Church; and if the office was undertaken with less humility than was becoming, the case, it must be allowed, was one of difficulty. It seemed not unsuitable, that they who had fought successfully, far

from priding themselves upon their advantage, should be foremost in promoting the restoration of their weaker brethren. The Church scarcely knew how to refuse the petition of her much-honoured martyrs; and God himself, it was argued, God who hears the prayer of faith, could not turn a deaf ear to that of his faithful witnesses. On the other hand, it was felt to be in the last degree dangerous to speak peace where God had not spoken it; and to admit to the cup of the Lord him who had just before drunk that of demons. What security, it was urged, have we for the constancy of our members, if their denial of faith is to be lightly passed over? who will find it worth his while to resist the torture, if his backsliding brother is to be presently restored, and put upon the same footing as he who has endured? Nor let it be said, that peace with God and peace with the Church were matters altogether distinct, and improperly connected in the discussions of that time. It was the business of the Church to comprise among her restored members those, and those only, whom God reckoned among the true penitents; and an error on either side of this narrow line was duly feared. By too great severity the lapsed might be hardened in his denial, or be driven to despair: while between his crime and his restoration, stood, as a flaming sword, the awful declaration, "He that denieth me before men shall be denied also before my Father which is in heaven." It was therefore judged advisable to sentence the apostate to a

course of penance, unless in danger of death, when a *clinical* or death-bed reconciliation was permitted. But the lapsed, impatient of their disgrace, bethought themselves of a shorter road to restoration. They beset the prisons, and begged tickets recommending their admission to the sacrament in the name of the confessors. To such an extent was this spiritual mendicity carried, that Cyprian complains that thousands of tickets were daily distributed; but in this estimate some allowance must be made for the manner of speaking customary with the Fathers.

And now began the struggle between clerical authority and the new power suddenly brought into existence. Some of the confessors abstained altogether from using the irregular privilege conferred upon them by popular acclamation, while others abused it to a dangerous extent. Saturninus, after his torture, declined giving any recommendatory letters, while Mappalicus interceded for his mother and sister alone. Aurelius, who could not write, employed Lucian to issue tickets in his name; and Paulus, not content with making Lucian his secretary, added a commission to distribute letters "in the name of the martyr Paulus" after his execution. This power suited well the wishes of Lucian, who was not backward in dispensing his favours. Celerinus, a Roman confessor, soon applied to him for tickets in behalf of Numeria and Candida, women who had acknowledged the heathen divinities in order to escape torture. The guilt of

Candida was somewhat extenuated, as she had, by bribing the officer, bought off the necessity for sacrificing; so that on arriving at Tria Fata in the Forum, she was suffered to return without going up to the Capitol. Lucian, who was now on the eighth day of suffering the penalty of slow starvation, with the prospect of living but a few days longer, took upon himself, in the name of Paulus and seventeen other martyrs, to salute Numeria and Candida, thereby declaring that they were restored to the Church. He next despatched a letter to Cyprian, informing him that the confessors had thought fit to grant peace to all whose conduct since their lapse had been inoffensive: they also cautioned Cyprian against refusing their request, on peril of their displeasure.

The disapprobation of Cyprian was strongly expressed: "It is not martyrs that make the gospel," he exclaimed, "but the gospel that makes martyrs."* While the confessors took upon themselves to proclaim peace indiscriminately, they threw upon Cyprian all the odium of refusing it to individuals; and by their loose manner of wording the letters they left a wide opening for the return of doubtful persons. "Let such a one with his friends be admitted to communion," was an unreasonable demand upon the leniency of the Church. The lapsed were reminded by Cyprian, that there was still a direct way to restoration, by confessing Christ before a heathen

* The confessors, by declaring peace to those whose apostasy was so recent, were in effect making a new gospel.

tribunal. Some adopted this nobler course: a woman named Bona, when dragged to sacrifice a second time, refused; her hands were held by her husband, while she involuntarily performed the act, crying out incessantly, "It is you, not I, that do it." She was banished, together with four others who had also previously lapsed; all these were admitted to communion. The case of the rest was deferred till Cyprian should be able to consult with his colleagues.

The lapsed, still clamorous for admission, continued to trouble Cyprian; but he received unexpected support from some of the confessors, who saw with regret the irregular proceedings of their brethren. Moyses and Maximus, Nicostratus and Rufinus, with others, addressed a letter to their bishop, thanking him for his exhortations, and attributing to him part of their success in their arduous conflict. At the same time they begged of him, by all that was noble in the confession of Christ, and fearful in the state of those who should deny Him, not to break down the hedge between the faithful and the apostate, or to allow room for the supposition that the difference between them was a slight one. But the lapsed, now grown outrageous, began to prescribe terms as if with the authority of the Church. Cyprian, surprised, inquired how they came to constitute the Church, seeing that God had declared himself to be "not the God of the dead, but of the living." Besides refusing their request, he confirmed the excommunication

of Gaius, presbyter of Didda, who had persisted in communicating with them.

On the decline of persecution, some of the surviving sufferers received ordination as readers and deacons. Aurelius, a youth, was made reader, though he deserved higher honours, having been banished, and afterwards tortured. Celerinus, who had passed nineteen days with his feet most painfully distended, was also made a reader. Numidicus, an older believer, was made presbyter, in consideration of his peculiar circumstances. He had exhorted many to endure martyrdom, and had sustained their courage at the last: he had seen his wife burnt to death by his side, and was himself half roasted by the flames, covered with stones, and left for dead. His daughter, who sought his body with the intention of burying it, found life not quite extinct, and, by the use of proper means, succeeded in restoring animation. In the prospect of such a presbyter Cyprian exulted, and looked forward to the time when Numidicus should be made a bishop. It was but natural, he thought, that all these should be promoted from the rack to the desk; that, having confessed Christ in torture, they should now declare His words in the church. It is pleasing to find that they were especially noted for their modesty and humility; qualities which forbid the supposition that any but the purest motives sustained them in their sufferings.

Among the monuments relating to martyrdom,

the inscriptions raised to individual martyrs first claim attention.

Lannus, the Martyr of Christ, rests here. He suffered under Diocletian. (The sepulchre is) also for his successors. (Boldetti.)

This fac-simile represents one of the very few epitaphs actually inscribed on the grave of a martyr, specifying him to be such. Its chief value lies in the letters E. P. S., showing that the tomb had been legally appropriated to Lannus and his family after him—et posteris suis.

There is another in Aringhi, apparently authentic.

PRIMITIVS IN PACE QVI POST
MVLTAS ANGVSTIAS FORTISSIMVS MARTYR
ET VIXIT ANNOS P. M. XXXVIII CONIVG. SVO
PERDVLCISSIMO BENEMERENTI FECIT

Primitius in peace: a most valiant martyr after many torments. Aged 38. His wife raised this to her dearest well-deserving husband.

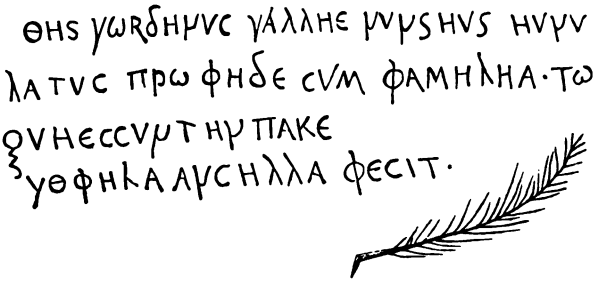
The honorary tablets raised to martyrs in subsequent times never contain any reference to the family of the deceased. As a specimen of them, may be taken the next.

TEMPORE ADRIANI IMPERATORIS MARIVS ADOLESCENS DVX MILITVM QVI SATIS VIXIT DVM VITAM PRO CHO CVM SANGUINE CONSUNSIT IN PACE TANDEM QVIEVIT BENEMERENTES CVM LACRIMIS ET METV POSVERVNT I. D. VI.

In Christ. In the time of the Emperor Adrian, Marius, a young military officer, who had lived long enough, when, with his blood he gave up his life for Christ. At length he rested in peace. The well-deserving set up this with tears and in fear. On the 6th Ides of December.

The concluding sentence shows this monument to have been erected during a time of actual persecution. The reader will perceive the difference of style in the two epitaphs.

The following was discovered by Aringhi in the cemetery of St. Agnes. The translation is borrowed from Boldetti, the author having found himself unable to decipher it.



Read — Hic Gordianus Galliæ nuncius, jugulatus pro fide, cum familiâ totâ; quiescunt in pace; Theophila ancilla fecit.

Translate— Here lies Gordianus, deputy of Gaul: who was murdered, with all his family, for the faith: they rest in peace; Theophila, his handmaid, set up this.

A monument of more doubtful description is a cup, on the outside of which are engraved the following lines:—

NON VNDA LETALIS EST
AVSA CONSTANTI FERRE
QVAM LICVIT FERRO CORONĀ.

The deadly draught dared not present to Constans that crown which the steel was permitted to offer.

In this cup, according to Aringhi, was presented to Constans a poisonous draught, which proved harmless: he was in consequence beheaded. The useless character of the miracle throws doubt upon the supernatural version of this story.

A most authentic and valuable testimony to the sweeping nature of the last persecution is contained in the two inscriptions erected on its termination by Diocletian and Galerius. According to Gruter, they were found on beautiful columns at Clunia, in Spain.

DIOCLETIAN . CAES .
AVG . GALERIO . IN . ORI
ENTE . ADOPT . SVPERS
TITIONE . CHRIST.
VBIQ . DELETA . ET . CVL
TV . DEOR . PROPAGATO

DIOCLETIANVS IOVIVS ET
MAXIMIAN : HERCVLEVS
CÆS : AVGG :

AMPLIFICATO PER ORIENTEM ET OCCIDENTEM
IMP : ROM :
ET
NOMINE : CHRISTIANORVM
DELETO QVI
REMP : EVER
TEBANT.

The first of these celebrates the universal extinction of the Christian superstition in the East, and the propagation of polytheism under Diocletian and Galerius. The second extols Diocletian and Maximian for having extended the Roman empire, and extinguished the name of the Christians, who were overturning the republic.

We have here a monument raised by Paganism over the grave of its vanquished foe. But in this "the people imagined a vain thing:" so far from being deceased, Christianity was on the eve of its final and permanent triumph, and the stone guarded a sepulchre empty as the urn which Electra washed with her tears. Neither in Spain nor elsewhere can be pointed out the burial-place of Christianity: "it is not; for the living hath no tomb."

The final establishment of our religion was effected almost without a struggle: the edicts of Constantine were received with acquiescence, and the nation appears to have been more than half christianised before Paganism was rejected by the state. A powerful reaction followed the last persecution, greatly increased by the divine judgments inflicted on some of its principal abettors: these were so remarkable as to give occasion to a

special work of Lactantius, intitled, " The Deaths of the Persecutors." The return of the exiled confessors was triumphant, and the Pagans themselves acknowledged the interference of God in behalf of His worshippers.

It has been assumed by antiquarians as a matter of certainty, that the ancient Christians employed symbols to distinguish the tombs of their martyrs. History being profoundly silent on this point, abundant room has been left for the exercise of imagination, in deciding what symbols would have been proper, and likely to be so used. Antiquarians have fixed upon several, which can only be disproved by direct evidence; and this is furnished in many cases by the dates of interment, and in others by the name or condition of the person deceased. The history of the " Symbols of Martyrdom" is consequently little more than a description of superstitions reluctantly abandoned from time to time: from being almost numberless, they have been reduced to one — a cup of blood beside the grave. To give the reader an idea of the signs formerly considered decisive of saintship and of martyrdom, it will be necessary to quote a few instances from the antiquarians of the three last centuries.

The learned Benedictine, Mabillon, while engaged in turning over the papers in the Barberini library, met with some correspondence relative to a pseudo-saint supposed to have been discovered in Spain. Some well-meaning persons had there met with an ancient stone, inscribed with the let-

ters "S. VIAR." and concluded it to be the epitaph of a Saint Viar. Nothing daunted by the singularity of the name, or the total want of evidence in support of his sanctity, they boldly established his worship. But the zeal of his admirers, though it had conferred the honours of saintship, was unable to secure his immortality; for, on their application to Urbanus for indulgences, the Roman antiquarians required some proof of his existence. The stone was therefore forwarded to Rome, where it was immediately seen to be the fragment of an inscription to a PræfectuS· VIARum, or Curator of the Ways.* We are apt to pity the condition of those who wasted their prayers and praises on the imaginary Viar, but in what respect were they worse off than the supplicants at the altars even of St. Peter and St. Paul?

A remarkable instance of carelessness in the manufacture of saints is mentioned by Mabillon, as having occurred at Tolosa very shortly before he wrote. An inscription was found in the Roman Catacombs, running thus:—

D·M
JVLIA . EVODIA . FILIA . FECIT
CASTAE . MATRI . ET . BENEMERENTI
QVAE · VIXIT · ANNIS · LXX

Upon the strength of this epitaph, raised by Julia Euodia to her chaste and well-deserving

* In a work of Gaetano Marini (Inscrizioni dei Palazzi Albani), is an inscription containing the abbreviation CVR · VIAR. (p. 3.) Ainsworth also gives this as the common contraction for Curator Viarum. Gruter has several times CVRATOR · DE · SACRA · VIA.

mother, containing no signs of Christianity, but rather the reverse, the bones found in that grave were esteemed holy, and were attributed to St. Julia Euodia, instead of her "chaste mother."* From the number of Pagan tombstones applied to Christian purposes in the later times of the emperors, we require some specific evidence to assure us of the Christian origin of any tablet found in the catacombs.

The romance of the eleven thousand virgins is said to owe its existence to the inscription,

VRSVLA · ET · XI · MM · VV ·

which was read, "Ursula and eleven thousand virgins;" instead of "eleven virgin martyrs."†

The history of St. Veronica exceeds all other legends of pseudo-saints in the pertinacity with which it has been supported by the Roman Church, in opposition to the learned of her own communion, and in the entire absence of traditional evidence. Its origin and progress have been brought to light by the researches of Romanist antiquarians.

About the darkest time of the middle ages arose the custom of painting the countenance of our Saviour upon pieces of cloth: the accuracy of the supposed likeness, or *icon* as it was called, was attested by inscribing beneath it the words "Vera icon," gradually corrupted into Veronica. Many

* Museum Italicum t. i. p. 225.

† Middleton's Letter from Rome.

writers mention these *veronicæ;* as observed by Mabillon, who has cited passages from Romanus, Petrus Casinensis, and Augustinus Patricius. Mabillon also mentions the petition of a certain Cistercian abbess, dated 1249, to Jacobus de Trecis, the Pope's chaplain, that he would send her a copy of the picture contained in St. Peter's. He complied with her request, and begged her to receive the copy as "a holy Veronica, Christ's true image or likeness."* The next stage in the growth of the legend (for it does not seem to be of older date,) was the discovery that the original Veronica was an actual impression of our Saviour's features, miraculously taken at some time or other: according to Mabillon, during the Agony in the garden; to Ducange, on the way to Calvary; and by another class of persons, as noticed by Baronius, supposed to have been left upon the head-dress in the sepulchre.† But the story still wanted something, and Veronica was at length found to be the name of a holy woman who followed our Lord to Calvary; and who, while piously wiping the Redeemer's brow with a cloth, received as a reward the miraculous impression of His countenance. Of this woman, whom Baronius calls Berenice, there is a colossal statue in St. Peter's at Rome; and what is worse, her image occupies a prominent place in the hearts of an ignorant people.

* Iter Italicum, p. 88.

† Ducange, Glossary, sub voce Veronica; Baronii Annales Eccles.

The authorities, so far from discountenancing the fiction, have offered a premium upon its belief: John XXII. who assumed the tiara in 1316, issued a prayer, "by repeating which devoutly, looking meanwhile upon the face of Christ, an indulgence of 10,000 days may be obtained." In this hymn the most ignorant version of the story is maintained by the "infallible" poet.

"Salve, sancta facies
Mei redemptoris,
In quâ nitet species
Divini splendoris.
Impressa panniculo
Nivei candoris,
Dataque Veronicæ
Signum ob amoris.
Salve, decus seculi
Speculum sanctorum,
Quod videre cupiunt
Spiritus cœlorum.
Nos ab omni maculâ
Purga vitiorum,
Atque nos consortio
Junge beatorum," &c.*

The handkerchief of St. Veronica is publicly worshipped in Rome on stated occasions, and the ceremony is performed with the utmost splendour: perhaps there is no part of the Romish ritual more calculated to strike the imagination. The prostrate multitude, the dome of St. Peter's dimly lighted

* This prayer is copied from an illuminated MS. in St. George's Library, Windsor. The end of the preface must not be omitted: "At si quis eam (orationem) ignoraverit, dicat v. $\overline{pr}$. $\overline{nr}$. inspiciendo Veronicam." Does this mean that five repetitions of the Lord's prayer would do as well as one of Pope John's?

by the torches in the nave, and the shadowy baldacchino, hanging to all appearance in mid-air, form a spectacle not easily forgotten.

The implements marked upon the gravestones, or inclosed in the tombs of ancient Christians, have furnished much matter of discussion to antiquarians, and not less encouragement to the superstitious hunters after martyrs' remains. The notion that they were the instruments by which the deceased had suffered martyrdom, is urged by Aringhi* with considerable learning. The Jews, he observes, buried criminals together with the cross on which they had suffered: and, according to some Rabbis, persons who had been stoned or beheaded were buried along with the swords or stones employed in their execution. The cross was found entire beside our Saviour's sepulchre†;

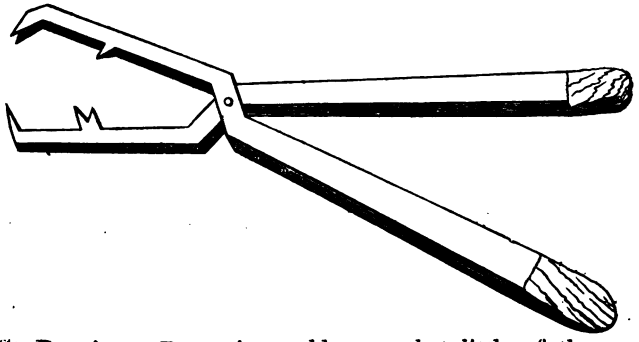
* Roma Subterranea, p. 685.

† The transaction called the "Invention of the Cross," in our calendar, will have little weight with most English readers. From the general tenor of the Homily against Peril of Idolatry, there is no reason for supposing that the Church of England intended to support this legend, any more than that of the "Conception of the Virgin Mary," which, together with the "Name of Jesus," and "O Sapientia," still appear in the calendar. The circumstance most unfavourable to our belief in the miraculous preservation of the cross, is the existence of "pious frauds," such as the Sibylline interpolations, and certain most suspicious "inventions" in the time of Ambrose. The discovery of the true cross was firmly believed in at the time: Paulinus immediately forwarded to his brother a splinter of the wood, as a fragment of that cross, "on account of which, with a trembling world, a fugitive sun, and the uprising of the dead from their shivered monuments, nature was shaken to her centre." Judging from the mere particle preserved in

and some ungulæ have been discovered in the martyrs' graves. Babylas, having died in chains, was buried with them. Symeon Stylites, according to a legend, was interred along with his iron bed, and the chains of St. Peter were found beside his corpse.

These doubtful traditions may be opposed by the fact, that we have no historical evidence that it was the custom of the Church to bury instruments of torture or of death with the martyrs. The habit of designing the emblems of a trade or profession upon the tombstone, was, on the contrary, extremely common, as will be seen in the chapter treating of symbols: and to inclose in the tomb itself objects of the toilette, children's playthings, &c., was a heathen custom, universally adopted by the Christians.

The supposed fragment of an ungula, or hooked forceps, here represented, was found in the Catacombs in the time of Paul III.: according to report it was of iron, and had the remains of wooden handles: it is figured in most works on the Catacombs.



St. Peter's at Rome, it would seem that little of the much-vaunted treasure is now in existence.

It was customary among the Romans to tear the sides of malefactors with the ungula; the Christians complained that in their own case, the judges ordered them to be torn on other parts of the person. But Tertullian fancifully contrasts the laceration of a Christian's sides with the cutting and hewing inflicted on the whole surface of the idols. In the "Peristephanon" of Prudentius, the instrument is named in almost every page. Wounds inflicted by the ungula were called "bisulca," or consisting of two furrows. Another instrument of the same kind is given by Aringhi.

The Vatican museum contains several pretended specimens of the torturing weapons: they are too new-looking to have deceived even the Roman antiquarians.

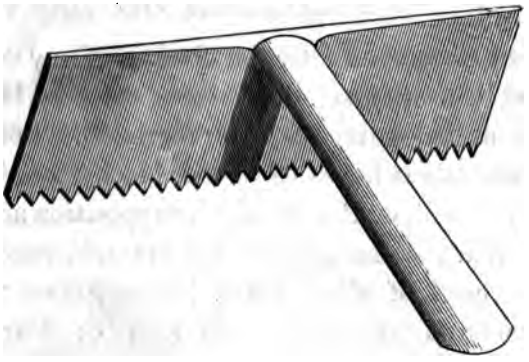
With this may be compared a hook engraved upon a Pagan tombstone, and published by Gruter. (p. 810.)

Q. NAVICVLARIS
VICTORINVS VAL.
SEVERAE CONIVG.
SAN.

It cannot be pretended that the instrument of execution was displayed upon the gravestone of a Pagan, as there was no credit in having suffered as an ordinary malefactor. The point is so turned

inwards, as to make this instrument useless for cutting.

The third and last of the so-called instruments of torture was discovered in the cemetery of Calepodius ; the annexed sketch is copied from Boldetti. It has been considered a comb for tearing the flesh of the martyrs.



Another comb, of a shape intermediate between this and one of the woolcombs belonging to the laniarii, is figured in Aringhi: this however is only a symbol cut upon the gravestone.

Without discussing at present the precise character of the implements found in graves, it is clear that these objects, if merely an imitation of the instruments of torture, are of no value as actual relics of the martyrs: and if it is pretended that they were really employed in the execution of those with whose bodies they were interred, we may answer, that it is incredible that the Christians should have obtained from the Pagan authorities their instruments of punishment, in order to add to the honours of the martyr's funeral.

The testimony of M. Raoul Rochette on this subject is valuable; in the epitaph of Benerus, a new saint transported from Rome to Perugia in 1803, is the figure of a forceps accompanied by the words,—

D · M · S ·
BENERVS · VIXIT · ANNOS
XXIII · MESES VII ·

On this he observes, "In the absence of any certain signs of Christianity, this instrument may be considered as belonging to his profession. Benerus, therefore, might have been a poor blacksmith, Christian if you will, or Pagan, which supposition accords better with the character of his epitaph, excepting for the vessel of blood found in his grave, which is considered an indubitable sign of Christian sanctity." * The real name is probably Venerius.

The picture of Diogenes, already explained, and that of Eutropus which follows, contain a number of implements relating to the occupation of the deceased. The hatchet in the workshop of Eutropus resembles one found in a grave by D'Agincourt, strengthening the supposition that the latter was only a symbol of trade.

The honours of a martyr have been generally conferred upon Eutropus, from the cup in his hand, and the praying posture in which he is represented; but neither evidence is satisfactory. The process

* Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles Lettres et d'Inscriptions, tom. xiii. This memoir must place M. R. Rochette in the highest rank of modern antiquarians.

of drilling a hole in the sarcophagus, is well expressed in the rude drawing; the instruments, supports, masks of lions, and *strigiles* upon the sarcophagus, are given with some accuracy.

Translate — The holy worshipper of God, Eutropus, in peace. His son made this. He died on the 10th Kalends of September. (Fabretti).

The assertion that a figure praying was intended as a symbol of martyrdom, appears to rest upon no good foundation. It is with regret that the author is forced to object to so many suppositions connected with the saints and heroes of the Catacombs: the assertion that "a martyr is only known by prayer" * on the sepulchral tablets, is what every Christian would be ready to believe, and hope to be true. But the absence of all evidence leads us to reject the praying figure as a sign of martyrdom, and to refer it to the class of symbols expressive of some Christian sentiment. Moreover, these figures often occur on handsome marble sarcophagi of the fourth

* R. Rochette, Académie des Belles Lettres et d'Inscriptions, tom. xiii. p. 169.

and fifth centuries, in which case they cannot be considered as indicative of martyrdom.

The custom of depositing small vessels with the bodies of the dead, was common among Pagans as well as Christians. Vessels of terra-cotta, glass, alabaster, and ivory, found in Christian tombs, have generally been considered as receptacles for blood: while those belonging to Pagans, though exactly similar, have been termed lacrymatories. Two important questions here present themselves:—1st. Were these vessels used by the Christians to contain blood? And 2dly, Were they exclusively affixed to martyrs' graves.

Several of these "ampolle di sangue" are marked with the first letters of the word Sanguis, or Sanctus. Two are here copied from Boldetti.

The inscriptions are usually read, Sanguis, and Sanguis Saturnini. — The blood of Saturninus. They would equally bear the construction Sanctus, and Sanctus Saturninus.

The chemical examination of the contents of these vases, as conducted by Leibnitz, and published by Fabretti, proved favourable to the presence of blood, or at least of organic matter. Yet the experiments instituted are far from being satisfactory to the modern practical chemist, though they serve to refute the assertion, that the red matter contained in the vessels was merely a mineral impregnation from the surrounding soil. One or two *pagan* vessels mentioned by R. Rochette are said to have exhibited marks of blood.

The arguments adduced from history, to establish the use of cups of blood to mark the grave of a martyr, are not more conclusive. The Christians were certainly in the habit of collecting carefully the blood shed in martyrdom, in order to preserve it as a memorial of the constancy of their deceased friend; but no mention is made of their burying it separately. Prudentius describes the Christians of Saguntum as anxious to obtain the blood of Vincent, who, being released from his tortures in order to

recover strength, died of his wounds. "One covers with kisses the double furrows of the ungula; another is glad to wipe the purple stream from his body: many dip a cloth in the dripping blood, that they may keep it at home, as a sacred palladium for their posterity." The same care was employed to collect the blood of Hippolytus, who had been dragged to pieces by a wild horse. Before the execution of Theodora, her friends covered the floor with their garments, that none of her blood might fall to the ground. Lysimachus is represented as saying to his officers, "Gather up all his limbs which are cut off, and carefully scrape up the blood, lest any remain." It is generally said that the blood of Cyprian was preserved by the faithful, though the circumstance is not mentioned by his biographer Pontius. All these stories are much coloured by their narrator.

The lines on the death of Quirinus do not furnish any evidence concerning the use generally made of the blood, though often quoted for that purpose. The bishop was sentenced to be drowned; and Prudentius, lamenting his fate, takes comfort from the reflection that he was equally a martyr, though without bloodshed.

Nil refert, vitreô æquore,
An de flumine sanguinis
Tinguat passio Martyrem:
Æquè gloria provenit,
Fluctu quolibet uvida.

The deep cold waters close o'er one;
Another sheds a crimson river:

No matter; either stream returns
A life to the Eternal Giver:
Each tinges with a glorious dye
The martyr's robe of victory.

In these verses there is obviously no allusion to the custom of burying the blood.

The "Congregation of Relics," held in 1668, has laid down rules for the prevention of mistakes on the subject. "The holy Congregation," it decreed, "having carefully examined the matter, decides that the palm and vessel tinged with blood are to be considered most certain signs of martyrdom: the investigation of other symbols is deferred for the present." The palm branch by itself is now almost universally abandoned; and the vessel of blood, though still generally received on the Continent as an emblem of martyrdom, is already attacked in various quarters, as being of uncertain meaning. The bondage to authority under which Romanist writers lie, has made them timid in expressing their sentiments on this point: they rather suggest than affirm; and it is difficult to gather from their writings the real opinion of the learned authors.

It may also be objected, that there is no mention of the custom in any contemporary writing. Throughout the "Acts of the Martyrs," and in the Poems of Prudentius, so explicit in every thing belonging to burial and the Catacombs, there is no allusion to any symbols of martyrdom. The expression, "a martyr's epitaph," occurs once in the "Peristephanon," and "the name of a martyr, or else some

anagram" is mentioned as found on many of the tombs.* The blood collected at the time of execution seems to have been preserved as a relic, not to have been buried: and the great number of cups discovered, passing by imperceptible gradations into drinking vessels, with inscriptions and figures, of a date posterior to that of the persecutions, leaves room to doubt their having been employed with any one uniform intention.

It is suggested by Roestell, and Raoul Rochette seems much disposed to agree with him, that the vessels in question were intended as sacramental cups, inscribed with the word *blood*, a figurative expression for wine, the dry lees of which have passed for blood in the analysis. In support of this conjecture, he adduces the custom, at one time known in the Church, though always condemned by authority, of administering the sacrament to the dead. "Let no one," says the Quinisextan Council, "offer the Eucharist to the dead: for it is written, 'Take and eat.' Now the dead can neither take nor eat." But this heterodox custom, prevalent in the seventh century, will scarcely account for the more ancient cups and vases: an easier explanation might be found in the Agape held over the grave of a newly buried person; or in the wish to express the deceased to have been a communicant.

The author is inclined to dissent from the general opinions of antiquarians, and to give a different account of the vases, and the names which they

* Peristephanon, Hymn iv.

bear. A number of vessels found in the Catacombs are inscribed with the name of St. Agnes; a glass has also been discovered with the letters, —

VITO —— IVAS IN NOMINE LAVRETI

Victoria, may you live. In the name of Laurence.

Now Saturninus, Agnes, and Laurence have all given their names to cemeteries; and either for this reason, or to claim protection from them as tutelary saints, their names have been inscribed on these vessels. As those martyrs suffered in the last persecution, the vessels so inscribed must be considered as of still later date: a circumstance almost fatal to their supposed connection with martyrs' remains. Between the heathen lacrymatory and the so-called martyr-vase there exists no well-defined difference; and not knowing the exact intention of the vessel in either case, beyond the probability that it was a depository for aromatic gums, we may suppose the Christians to have borrowed it from the Pagans, with such modification of its use as time and circumstance suggested.

A number of vessels have on them expressions belonging to festive joy. The usual one—PIE ZESE (for ζησαις), "Drink and live," seems to refer to the sacramental cup. A fragment of one is here figured *; it is evidently of a date later than the time of persecution.

* From Buonarotti. Vetri antichi.

Between the heads of the persons represented is seen a cylindrical vase, exactly similar to that in the hand of Eutropos: an additional reason for not viewing the cup as invariably connected with martyrdom.

The annexed engraving represents a vessel of the lacrymatory form (copied from Buonarotti), having inscribed upon it—

VINCENTI PIE ZESE — Vincent, drink and live.

Three conquering horses, *equi vincentes*, are seen upon the lower part of the fragment. They are common symbols of a course well finished: and probably in this instance contain an allusion to the name of Vincent. The inscription round the lower part is AEGIS OIKOYMENE ZEP, reversed.

The cup, so often enclosed in the tomb, or cemented to the rock outside, is sometimes merely drawn upon the gravestone, as in the accompanying fac-simile. (Lap. Gall.)

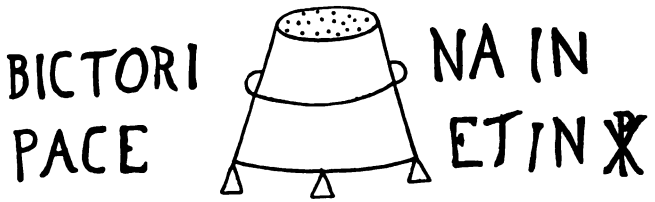
Read—Brenzeino patri benemerenti. To Brenzeinus, my well-deserving father.

The unusual name reminds us of that of the Italian painter Bronzino, probably derived from it.

The cups drawn upon this stone may be explained in the same way as the vessels found in the graves. The expedient of representing in this manner objects which the poverty of friends prevented them from depositing beside the corpse, is one to which continued recourse was had by the early Christians. This observation may be verified in its most extended sense: whatever is found enclosed in graves is also seen figured on tombstones.

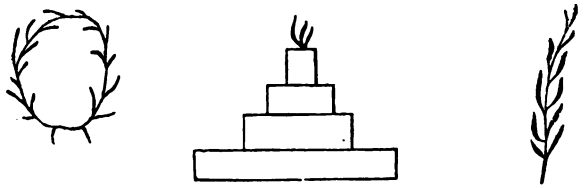
In the epitaph of Vernaclus Carpitanus, the cup is of another shape. (Lap. Gall.)

The following has found its way into Boldetti's great work, where the figure upon the stone is interpreted as a furnace used in the martyrdom of Victorina. It is here copied, not from his engraving, but from the Lapidarian Collection, in which it is preserved.



Victorina in pace et in Christo.

The inscription to Horia, contained in some antiquarian works, exhibits an altar burning: —



BENEMCPCNTI IN PACE
VIT XX MCSIS VI DIAE C XVIII
FELIX FCCIT HORIAE QVAE ANNOS.

This must be read from below upwards:

Felix made this to Horia, who lived 20 years, 6 months, and 18 days. To the well-deserving, in peace.

Neither this nor the preceding epitaph can be proved to belong to martyrs.

Thus it appears that the supposed symbols of martyrdom lie under most serious objections. Excepting in a very few cases, where the deceased is expressly described as a martyr, that circumstance seems to have been left unrecorded in the cemetery.

Raoul Rochette betrays the same opinion in the following striking passage: — "The bones of the martyrs are the sole remains of those heroes of the faith, even in their sepulchres: cups and fragments of glass, instruments of their profession, or symbols of their faith, are the only monuments left of their life or of their death. To look at the Catacombs alone, it might be supposed that persecution had there no victims, since Christianity has made no allusion to suffering." "Perhaps I may be allowed to add," he continues, "that a series of paintings, like those of St. Stefano in Rotondo (a church in Rome), filled with all the scenes of barbarity which the rage of executioners could devise, or the constancy of martyrs support, honours less the faith which inspires such images, or which resisted such trials, than the paintings of the Catacombs, generally so pure, so peaceful in their object and intention, where it seems that the Gospel ought to have met with no enemies, appearing so gentle, so ready to forgive."* The work from which these lines are quoted is interdicted in Rome.

The origin of martyr-worship dates from a period but little subsequent to the Diocletian persecution. Traces of an undue estimate of martyr-merit are to be found earlier, but the pressure of actual persecution seems to have imposed a check upon its progress. The full-grown superstition was reached by natural and too easy steps. The martyr

* Tableau des Catacombes, p. 194.

first appears as a being of superior sanctity; as one who has conferred an obligation upon his Master, and is entitled to the worth of it in favour of others: his intercession with the Church in behalf of the excommunicated is confounded with mediation between God and man: and when at last he is described as ascending to heaven, charged with petitions to be presented before the throne, and followed thither by fresh prayers and praises, — a little more, and the historian might be celebrating the Protomartyr Himself again incarnate — again challenging the exclamation, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?"

The prayers addressed to martyrs even assumed the form of those used in divine worship. Of such a character is the prayer of Prudentius to Vincent, in the form of a litany: —

Per te, per illum carcerem,
Honoris augmentum tui,
Per vincla, flammas, ungulas,
Per carceralem stipitem:
Per fragmen illud testeum,
Quô parta crevit gloria;
Et quem trementes posteri
Exosculamur lectulum,
Miserere nostrarum precum.

By thyself, renowned in story,
By that prison, scene of glory,
By those chains and fires:
By the stake, the harrowing prong;
By each flint whose edge inspires
Higher raptures to my song:
By that couch of bitterness
Which with trembling lips we press,
Pitying, aid our prayer.

The power at first given to martyrs was limited to the relaxation of ecclesiastical penance. As early as the year 200, Tertullian complained of the abuses prevalent on this subject: "As soon as any one is confined by an easy imprisonment, straightway he is surrounded by criminals of every description; he is beset with the prayers and tears of the impure; nor do any bribe their way to his cell more than they whom the churches have lost."

"Some fly to the mines, and return communicants: whereas they need a second martyrdom to expiate the crimes committed since their first. For who on earth and alive, what martyr-denizen of the globe, is free from sin? Imagine his head already under the impending sword: grant that his body is now attached to the cross: allow that the lion is actually loosed, or the fire lighted: suppose him already bound to the wheel, even in the very security and possession of martyrdom: who can suffer him, a mere man, to grant what is the prerogative of God alone?—God, who has condemned such an assumption beyond excuse, inasmuch as the Apostles, martyrs themselves, never pretended to it." *

Cyprian, writing in 251, allows the possible efficacy of martyr intercession: "We are as willing as any can be to make all fit allowances to the merits of the martyrs, and to their interest in our righteous

* De Pudicitia, cap. 22.

Judge; but not till the day of judgment;" till which time the answer to martyrs' prayers was deferred. Rev. vi. 9—11. At the same time he would have no man presume upon it, "lest the unhappy offender should add to his other misfortune the curse denounced by God against such as trust in man. Our Lord alone is to be the object of his prayer, He alone is to be pacified by the penitent's humiliation." *

The martyr's surrender of his body to the executioner was viewed as an act of faith, excepting in the case of heretics, in whom the existence of a true faith was denied by the orthodox. The believer as it were entered into a fresh covenant, giving up his life for Christ, and claiming eternal life with Him. "Martyrdom," observes Tertullian, "is a baptism: 'I have a baptism to be baptized with.'" So Cyprian, in the preface to his exhortation to martyrdom: "There is this difference between the baptism by water and that by blood, that the one entitles us to the immediate remission of our sins, the other to the immediate reward of our virtues. It is a baptism after which no sin can be committed." Thus martyrdom came to be considered a sacrament, and one of certain efficacy, seeing that no subsequent fall could annul its power. "Be thou faithful unto death," was evermore whispered in the ear of the confessor, "and I will give thee a crown of life." Was the promise

* De Lapsis, c. 11.

claimed too absolutely, and without sufficient regard to the motives which led to martyrdom? Or was too exclusive an importance attached to the declaration, that, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation?" In an age so beset with terrors, was it presumptuous to take as the motto of the confessor, "He that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall find it?" Be this as it may, primitive martyrdom appears to have contributed largely to the conversion of the world: for the rapid extension of Christianity almost ceased within a few years after the last persecution.

CHAPTER V.

THE SYMBOLS USED IN THE CATACOMBS.

THE sudden falling off in Roman art during its transition from Pagan to Christian hands, is partly to be accounted for by the inferior station in society occupied by the early converts. It cannot be said that Christianity suffered the arts to decline merely from want of patronage, for all the talent available was dedicated to her service, as soon as she was enabled to assert her dominion. But, up to that time, the assistance which she sought from art was of a character altogether unfavourable to the display of its power. In the works executed by Christians before the fourth century, truth of representation was a matter of indifference. A cross, however rudely expressed, perfectly symbolised their faith: the most elaborate bas-relief of the figure, crowned and jewelled, told no more.

This levelling all distinction between degrees of skill, proved fatal to the knowledge of proportion and design. The symbolic meaning, since it claimed exclusive consideration, superseded all necessity of pleasing the eye, and even of satisfying the judgment: the escape of Jonah from the whale did not the less comfortably typify the

resurrection of the dead, because the fish was chimera-like, the ship a mere boat, and the sea a rivulet: nor was faith stumbled by the anachronism of Noah receiving the dove, in the background of the scene.

The peculiarities of this style of art, if so dignified a name may be given to it, will claim notice in another place; at present we have to do with the tendency to reduce to a hieroglyphic form the representation of the elements of our religion. By *hieroglyphic* is here intended the appropriation of some one figure to the expression of a particular idea: thus the raising of Lazarus was used as a symbol of the resurrection; and the dove, as an emblem of peace with God.

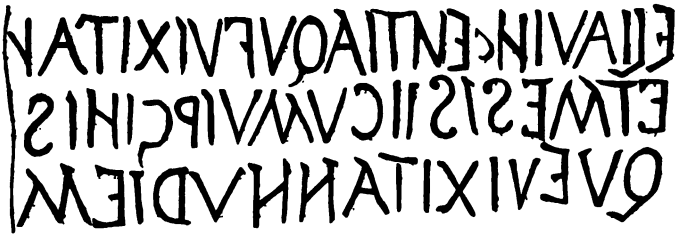
It was not to the taste and imagination that works of this description were addressed; the only qualification necessary for their comprehension was faith, which supplied the life and beauty wanting to the misshapen forms. In these, till understood, there was nothing attractive; but when interpreted, and viewed by the believing eye, they told of a rest from trouble, compared to which, "the golden

slumber on a bed of heaped Elysian flowers" was but an unquiet dream.

So entirely had the fine arts been appropriated to the use of polytheism, that it was only under the severest restrictions that they could be admitted to the service of the Church. With the monogamist Tertullian, to paint was a crime to be classed with second marriages: he says of Hermogenes, "He paints unlawfully, he marries repeatedly: the law of God, when in favour of his passions, he approves; when against his art, he despises: doubly a liar, with pencil and with pen: utterly profligate in theory and practice." Most narrowly watched of all, sculpture had to surrender many of its characteristics, before it could pass for an auxiliary to Christianity: how effectually its fair proportions were disguised, may be seen by comparing with the bas-reliefs of the Vatican Library the marble treasures of the adjoining museums.

Perhaps the cause which most powerfully contributed to the adoption of Christian symbols, was the ignorance of reading and writing then prevalent. Books, and even inscriptions, were for the learned: unlettered survivors were in no way consoled by the epitaph of the deceased, or enlightened by the figures expressing his age and the day of his death. In some instances the most absurd mistakes of the stone-cutter have passed unaltered. The annexed inscription, copied from the Lapidarian Gallery, is entirely reversed: and the husband of Elia seems to have had no friend to point out

to him the error, and put him upon obtaining a more intelligible record of his wife.



This epitaph becomes legible when viewed in a mirror, and then exhibits only the N reversed. The stone-cutter has probably endeavoured to take off upon the marble the impression of a written inscription. It signifies, "Elia Vincentia, who lived — years and 2 months. She lived with Virginius a year and a day."

Even when the stone-cutter has performed his part unexceptionably, the orthography of some epitaphs is so faulty as almost to frustrate their intention. Since the invention of printing, spelling has become comparatively fixed, even to the lowest class of writers; and we can imagine no modern inscription so miserably conceived as the annexed:

IIBER QVI VIXI QVAI QVO
PARE IVA ANOIVE I ANORV
M PLVI MINVI XXX I PACE.

Read—Liber, qui vixit cum compare sua annum I. Annorum plus minus xxx. in pace.

For such persons, another method of representation was necessary; and the symbols, though they imperfectly supplied the deficiency, were the only substitutes known. This view is forced upon us

by the existence of phonetic signs: such as the ass on the tomb of Onager, and the lion on that of Leo: an idea so strange, and to our taste so bordering upon caricature, that it can only be explained by the necessity for some characteristic mark of the deceased, intelligible to his unlettered relations. When those employed in seeking the grave of their departed friend saw the lion, the pig, the ship, or the cask, by pronouncing the name of the object, they expressed that of the occupant of the tomb. Mabillon mentions finding the fragment of an Egyptian idol beside a catacomb grave, apparently set there by way of a distinctive sign. Fabretti, who accompanied him, maintained that it was no mark of idolatry, as its strong resemblance to the mummy of Lazarus would sufficiently warrant the use made of it.*

The symbols employed in the Catacombs, exclusive of those supposed to belong to martyrdom, are of three kinds: the larger proportion of them refer to the profession of Christianity, its doctrines, and its graces: a second class, of a purely secular description, only indicate the trade of the deceased: and the remainder represent proper names. Of the first class, the cross, as the most generally met with, claims our earliest consideration.

It would be difficult to find a more complete revolution of feeling among mankind, than that which has taken place concerning the instrument of crucifixion: once the object of horror and a

* Mabillon, Museum Italicum, vol i. p. 137.

symbol of disgrace, it is now the blessed emblem of our faith; the sign of admission, by baptism, to all the benefits of Christian fellowship. "No effort of the imagination," says Milman*, "can dissipate the illusion of dignity which has gathered round it: it has been so long dissevered from all its coarse and humiliating associations, that it cannot be cast back and desecrated into its state of opprobrium and contempt." How soon it began to be used as a symbol of Christianity, it is difficult to say: the gradual change to a crucifix is much

* Bampton Lectures, p. 279.

more easily traced. But in undergoing this change, the original intention of the symbol was entirely lost: from being a token of joy, an object worthy of being crowned with flowers, a sign in which to conquer,—it became a thing of tears and agony,—a stock-subject with the artist anxious to display his power of representing anguish.

The above sketch, taken from a bas-relief in the Vatican library, shows the feeling connected with the Cross by the early Church. The fragment of that emblem is surmounted by a garland of flowers enclosing the monogram of our Saviour's name: and upon it sits the dove, symbol of the peace with God purchased by the Redeemer's death. Such representations were common about the fourth and fifth centuries. Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who wrote inscriptions for the different parts of his basilica, placed beneath the crowned cross the words, "Bear the cross, you who wish to receive the crown." Elsewhere he says, in allusion to the same —

"The labour and reward of the saints justly go together;
The arduous cross, and the crown, its noble recompence."

The symbol of our religion was fancifully traced by the Fathers throughout the universe: the four points of the compass, a man swimming, a ship sailing: the "height, breadth, length, and depth" of the Apostle, all expressed, or were expressed by, the cross. A bird flying up to heaven expanded its wings into the mystic figure. The cross explained every thing: if Moses routed the Ama-

lekites, it was by means of the outstretched arms which resembled the sign of redemption.

"Et manibus tensis hostilia castra fugavit,
Unus homo, crucis in formam pia brachia fingens." *

In this idea Gregory was preceded by Prudentius, who observes, in his Cathemerinon —

"Sublimis Amalech premit
Crucis quod instar tunc fuit."

"He on high overcomes Amalech, because of his resemblance to a cross." The same posture in prayer was general among the Christians, and is mentioned by Tertullian. The very material of the cross did not escape application by Cyprian — "Their bodies certainly should not shrink at a club, who have all their hopes depending upon wood."

The change from cross to crucifix, in ancient monuments, is gradual: first occurs the simple cross; afterwards, a lamb appears at the foot of it. In a third stage there is "Christ, clothed, on the cross, with hands uplifted in prayer, but not nailed to it; in the fourth, Christ fastened to the cross with four nails, still living, and with open eyes. He was not represented as dead till the tenth or eleventh century." †

Of the first form of the cross, common even in ornamental works, we have already seen a specimen: the second is mentioned by Paulinus, who

* Gregory of Nazienzen.

† Milman, History of Christianity, vol. iii. p. 515.

wrote about the year 400. "Beneath the ensanguined cross stands Christ in the form of a snow-white Lamb: as an innocent victim is the lamb consigned to unmerited death."* The custom, still prevalent in Italy, of painting crosses in situations where they were likely to be exposed to indignity, was forbidden by the Quinisextan Council, held A.D. 706. "Since we offer adoration to the cross, in thought, word, and intention, we order that those representations of it which some persons have placed on the ground, and in pavements, be entirely effaced; lest, by the tread of passers-by, the trophy of our victory be dishonoured."

The custom of adding a cross or crucifix to the Trisagion scandalised some persons in the fifth century. The heathen, it was said, would believe from it, that God had been crucified. A few heterodox Christians found in it a pretext for the opinion, that the second person of the Trinity was divided into two. The sculptor was accused of making a Quaternity, by introducing a suffering Son in addition to the Three Persons of the Trisagion. The correspondence relative to the Council of Chalcedon displays in a remarkable manner the jealousy with which the doctrine of the Church on these points was guarded: it also shows that heathen still existed throughout the Roman empire.

From another canon of the Quinisextan Council, we learn at what time the change from the lamb to the victim in human form was generally adopted:

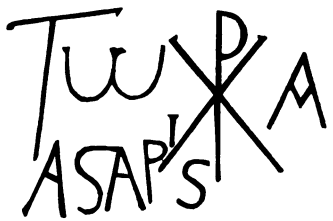
* Paulini Nolan. Epistolæ.

"We ordain that the representation in human form of Christ our God, who takes away the sin of the world, be henceforward set up, and painted, in the place of the ancient lamb." * Thus it is that we find the spirit of Christianity regularly undergoing that transformation which in the middle ages reduced it to the condition of a dismal creed: the cheerful conceptions of the early Church, itself nursed in scenes of horrible realities, were too simple and refined for after times. The Byzantine paintings, contained in the cabinets of the Vatican library, forcibly display the taste of the dark ages. In that small museum, deserving of much more attention than it receives, may be traced the harsh tone of feeling that would ever connect religion with terror and disgust. The subjects of those paintings are nearly always distressing: the Divine Infant, with a heavy contracted countenance, destitute of youthful expression, excites no sympathy for the helpless offspring of the Virgin: and the "man of sorrows," a more usual object of representation, covered with triangular splashes of blood, with a face indicative of hopeless anguish, intense in expression, and not deficient in execution, illustrates less the Redeemer's life than a dark page in the history of Christendom. To this school of art, which comes down almost to the tenth or eleventh century, the western world added sculpture, forbidden by the iconoclast zeal of the East: but both divisions of Christendom underwent the same fate: the sky of sacred art

* Canon 82.

darkened, as the Saviour's countenance, its proper sun, shed a more disastrous light over its scenes of woe; till the last glimmering of Divine majesty suffered total eclipse from the exclusive display of agonised humanity.

The monogram of our Saviour's name, rudely expressed in the annexed fac-simile, (Lap. Gall.)

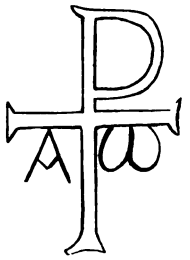


is composed of χ and ρ, the first letters of Χριστος. We preserve a vestige of this figure by writing Xmas, and Xtian, which can only be explained by supposing the first letter to stand for the Greek X, *chi*. The above inscription is to be read—Tasaris, in Christ the First and the Last.

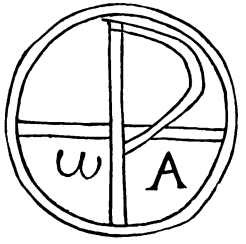
The alpha and omega, reversed in this epitaph, refer to the well-known passage in the Apocalypse: their continual use proves the general reception of that book as a part of the inspired canon.

The α and ω are mentioned by Tertullian, as well as by Prudentius. From the ignorance of the sculptor, the entire symbol was sometimes inverted, as in the next. The circle is supposed to imply the eternity of Christ.

A change was afterwards made by the decussation (as it is technically termed) of the X: by which the figure of a cross was produced. Having once arrived at this happy coincidence, the monogram remained stationary. Its simple outline, thus chiselled on a grave-stone, *



or accompanied by the misplaced letters *

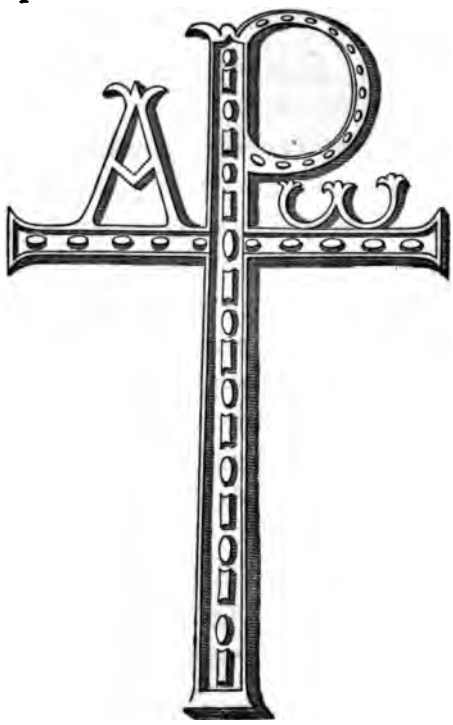


or even converted into Psr, as if for Psristos, *

* Lap. Gall.

To our great God. Eliasa to Soricius, in Christ.

was in course of time ornamented with jewels; and the *monogramma gemmatum* took its place as a work of art among Christian bas-reliefs of the fourth century. The best specimen contained in the Lapidarian Gallery is here given: the jewels are only in marble, but they represent the real gems often lavished upon the ancient cross.



It has been said, that the monogram was not invented before the time of Constantine, and that it was first seen by him in his miraculous vision. An epitaph, such as the subjoined, discovered by Bosio, may well be assigned to that time, when the motto "In hoc vinces" might have become common:

IN HOC VINCES

SINFONIA ET FILIIS
V · AN · XLVIII M · V · D IIII

In this thou shalt conquer — In Christ. Sinfonia, also for her sons — She lived forty-eight years, five months, and four days.

The next is contained in Oderici:

IN ☧ VICTRIX

which probably signified,

Victrix (a woman's name), victorious in Christ.

But the epitaphs of Alexander and Marius, martyrs under Adrian and Antonine, also exhibit the monogram: and though they do not appear to have been executed at the time, they contain strong marks of belonging to a period of violent persecution. The author does not possess any more decisive means of disproving the assertion made by Gaetano Marini, that the earliest monogram belongs to the year 331, that is, six years after the Council of Nice.

The annexed is from Boldetti, and represents a stamp of about an inch and a half in diameter, impressed upon the plaster of a grave: the P (*r*) of the monogram also serves as a *p* in the words *spes Dei*.

It is to be read — My hope is in God Christ.

The only resemblance to the monogram used by the heathen, was the ceraunium ⚹ or symbol of lightning. The Egyptian cross appears to be an abbreviation of the Nilometer.

SIGNV

CELIX · ET CEREALIS · PATRI · BENEM ·
QVI · VIXIT · ANNIS · LXXXV · M · VIII · D · V
DORMIT IN PACEM.

Translate — The mark of Christ. Celix and Cerealis to their well-deserving father, &c.

There is no authority for the statement that the monogram was a symbol of martyrdom, and signified "for Christ." In many incriptions, we read *in* ⚹; as in

IN ⚹ ASELVS D

Aselus sleeps (or, is buried,) in Christ.

According to Prudentius, the name of Christ "written in jewelled gold marked the purple Labarum, and sparkled from the helmets" of the army of Constantine; but this is probably a poetical fiction.*

The fish was a symbol expressive of the name of Christ; and remarkable as affording a combination of every thing desirable in a tessera, or mystic sign.

* Liber I. contrà Symmachum.

The Greek for fish, ἰχθυς, contains the initials of Ιησους Χριστος Θεου Υιος Σωτηρ; Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour: a sentence which had been adopted from the Sibylline verses. Moreover, the phonetic sign of this word, the actual fish, was an emblem whose meaning was entirely concealed from the uninitiated: an important point with those who were surrounded by foes ready to ridicule and blaspheme whatever of Christianity they could detect. Nor did the appropriateness of the symbol stop here. "The fish," observed Tertullian, "seems a fit emblem of Him whose spiritual children are, like the offspring of fishes, born in the water of baptism."

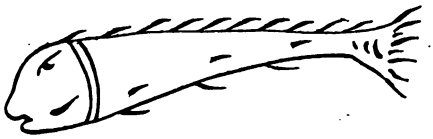
Sometimes the word ἰχθυς was expressed at length, as in the two following: (Lap. Gall.)

IKΘYC
BONO ET INOCENTI FILIO
PASTORI · QV · X · A · N · IIII

NNIS · X
IXΘYC

The first contains the mistake of κ for χ.

At other times the fish itself was figured, as recommended by Clement of Alexandria. The specimen here given is from the Lapidarian Gallery:



The dove, also specified by Clement, signifies undoubtedly, peace with God. In the annexed fac-simile (Lap. Gall.) the word *peace* is added.

The olive branch which it bears, is borrowed from the history of Noah: it was sometimes carried in the claws of the bird, as in the accompanying, copied from the Vatican library.

IENVARIE BIRGINI
BENEMERENTI IN
PACE BOTIS DEPOSITA

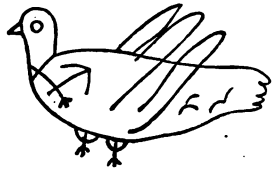
To Jenuaria, a virgin, well-deserving. Buried in peace, with vows.

The substitution of *botis* and *birgini*, for *votis* and *virgini*, is an unusual instance: the *b* and *v* are sometimes as absurdly reversed.

BIB · BEOVENE
MERENTI

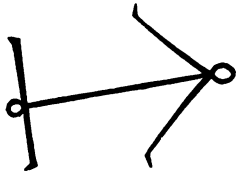
To Bibbeus the well-deserving.

DECEMBER S EVIVO FECIT SIBI
BISOMVM.

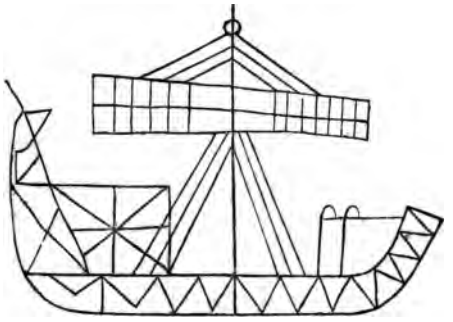


In Christ. December, while living, made himself a Bisomum.

The anchor noticed by Clement of Alexandria, is understood to signify the close of a well-spent life: the conclusion of a successful voyage, when the anchor is cast.



This supposition is strengthened by the fact, that the Church was often represented by a ship sailing heavenward: ἡ ναυς ουρανοδρομοῦσα of Clement: in later times steered by Sts. Peter and Paul. One of the figures is here copied:



This symbol may help to explain the expression used by St. Peter, "so shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly:" generally referred to the prosperous entrance of a vessel into port. The ignorance displayed by the sculptor is scarcely to be accounted for, excepting by the circumstance, that the traffic on the Tiber was confined to barges, unprovided with masts and sails, and towed by horses. The last four are from the Lapidarian Gallery.

A number of sarcophagi exhibit at each corner the mask used by actors: this refers to an idea sometimes implied, though seldom expressed by the writers of ancient times. "All the world's a stage," is a sentiment likely to occur only to a nation well accustomed to the drama; though it is sometimes attributed to the prophet David, in the sentence translated, "Every man walketh in a vain show;" (or image, margin. ref.) Ps. 39. It is elegantly expressed in a Pagan inscription preserved by Gruter:

VIXI · DVM · VIXI · BENE · JAM · MEA
PERACTA · MOX · VESTRA · AGETVR
FABVLA · VALETE · ET · PLAVDITE.

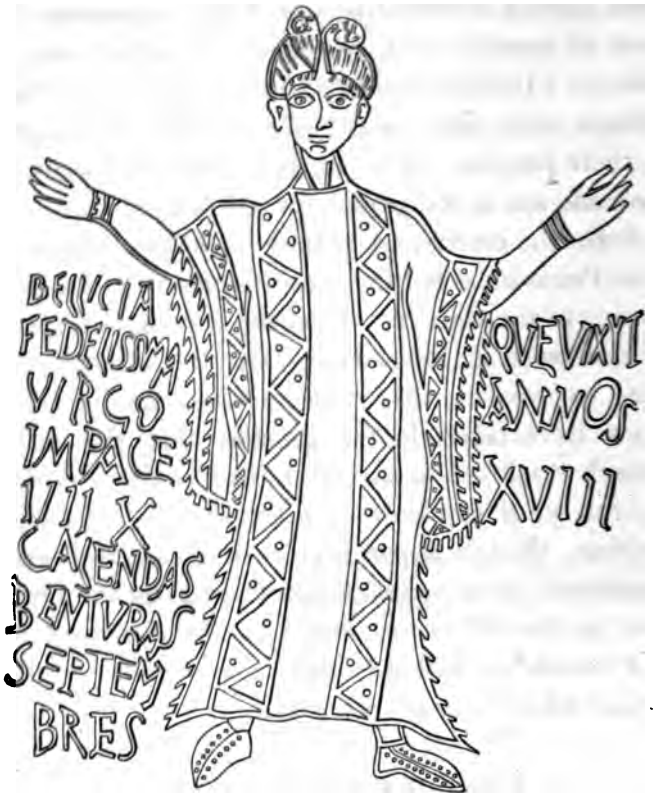
"While I lived, I lived well. My drama is now ended, soon yours will be: farewell, and applaud me."

The peacock is said to have been used as an emblem of immortality. This idea was borrowed from the Pagans, who employed it to signify the apotheosis of an empress: for this purpose it was let fly from the funeral pile on which her body was consumed. The phœnix was also adopted by the Christians with the same intention. The crowned horse, a sign of victory, has been already mentioned.

The supposed emblems of martyrdom, such as a figure praying, a crown, or a palm-branch, generally belong to this class. The praying figure sometimes occurs on sarcophagi of costly workmanship, as in the accompanying instance;

also scratched with a chisel, and afterwards filled in with red.

One on the next page is copied from D'Agincourt, by whom it was discovered: the original was nine inches in height. This carefully-finished production exhibits exactly the dress of unmarried women at the time. Notwithstanding Tertullian's vehement treatise on the Veiling of Virgins, and the restrictions concerning their dress laid down by Cyprian, little attention seems to have been paid to either by the friends of Bellicia.



The epitaph is — Bellicia, a most faithful virgin, who lived 18 years. She died in peace, on the 14th Calends of September.

The dress of the figure consists of the *stola institia*, or fringed cloak, ornamented shoes, and an arrangement of the hair, marking the times of the later Emperors. The posture is that described by Tertullian as proper to prayer: in this particular the Christians copied the Pagans, who prayed to the Dii superi (celestial gods) with their hands turned upwards: but addressed the infernal deities with

them turned downwards. So Virgil represents his hero as praying with his hands stretched out to heaven: "Duplices tendens ad sidera palmas." This posture must have materially limited the length of their prayers. The praying figure is always of the same sex as the person buried beneath it.

Both the crown and palm-branch are borrowed from Paganism: but they received additional significance to the Christian from the mention of them in the book of Revelation. On the strength of some expressions there used, antiquarians of later times have taken it for granted that the early Church employed both crown and palm, or either separately, as emblems of martyrdom. This supposition, though apparently reasonable, has been abandoned from want of proof: and such a fragment as the following, found in the cemetery of St. Priscilla*, is now only supposed to belong to the epitaph of an ordinary Christian:

NA VIBAS
DOMINO
E S V

Translate, * * * * na, may you live in the Lord Jesus.

The crown and palm conjoined are also met with: in the present example, from the Vatican library, they encircle the monogram, as represented on the following page:

* Lap. Gallery.

·FL·IOVINA·QVAE·VIX
·ANNIS·TRIBVS·D·XXX
·NEOFITA·IN PACE·XI·K

Flavia Jovina—who lived three years, and thirty days—a neophyte—in peace.—(She died) the eleventh Kalends.....

The extreme youth of the neophyte, while it proves the custom of infant baptism, makes the martyrdom of Jovina improbable.

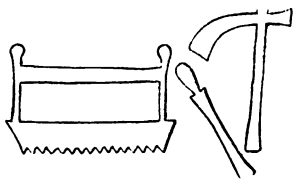
The symbols of trade figured upon grave-stones were long regarded by antiquarians as indicating the instrument by which the deceased had suffered martyrdom. Yet the entire absence of proof, added to the mass of horrors entailed upon history by the strange nature of the torments thus called into existence, might have staggered their credulity: and the combination of objects belonging to the same trade should have suggested a better explanation. The dates of some contradict the supposition, as in the epitaph of Constantia, which the author copied from the walls of the Capitoline Museum:

DEPOSITA COSTANTIA VI KAL IVLIAS·
HONORIO AVG·V·CONSVLE DIE DOMINI
AQVAE VIXIT ANNOS P·M·SEXAGINTA
BENEMERENTI IN PACE.

Constantia, buried in peace, on Sunday, the 6th Kalends of July, in the 5th Consulate of Honorius Augustus, &c.

Honorius was Consul several times between the years 390 and 422. His fifth consulate is placed by Ainsworth in 402, long after the persecutions had ceased. The knife and mallets do not quite fix the trade: women might have been then employed in beating flax, &c., as well as in combing wool. The inscription to Bauto and his wife (Lap. Gall.) is more decisive; the adze and saw being of the form now employed:

BAVTO ET MAXIMASI VIVI
FECERVNT



Bauto and Maxima made this during their lifetime.

The Pagans were also in the habit of using signs to indicate a trade or profession. There is a bag sculptured upon a stone on the right-hand wall of the Lapidarian Gallery, with the inscription —

VIATOR · AD · AERARIVM — Serjeant to the Exchequer.*

Raoul Rochette mentions the monument of Atimetus, described as a *pullarius*, or poulterer: it exhibits a cage of chickens. The sphere and cylinder on the tomb of Archimedes, by which Cicero discovered the resting-place of the mathematician, furnish a well-known instance of the practice.

* Several epitaphs in Gruter contain the same title: also, "Viator questoris ad aerarium."

The tombstone of Adeodatus (Lap. Gall.) expresses tolerably well the implements of a wool-comber.

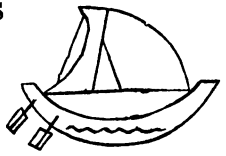
They consist of a pair of shears, a comb, and a plate of metal with a rounded handle. The speculum, often used to indicate the same trade, is here omitted. It is inserted in the epitaph of Veneria, which the author found in the wall of a passage in No. 22. Piazza di Spagna, Rome.

To Veneria in peace.

Three of the instruments contained in this drawing, though not very like those of Adeodatus, agree with them in every important particular: how much more naturally may they be explained as above, than by having recourse to the supposition that they were used for scraping, clipping, and dividing the limbs of a martyr. It would be easy to adduce other instances of this employment of symbols; but those already quoted will, it is hoped, satisfy the reader as to their relation to the trade of the deceased.

The remaining symbolic figures used by the Christians of ancient Rome, with a few exceptions, were employed to distinguish the tomb of a friend or relation. The phonetic intention of these figures is expressed in the well-known epitaph of Navira:

NABIRA IN PACE ANIMA DVLCIS
QVI BIXIT ANOS n XVI M V
ANIMA MELEIEA
TITVLV FACTV
APARENTES SIGNVM NABE

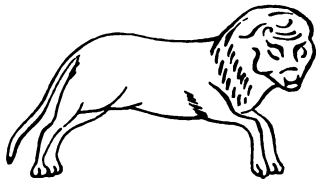


Navira, in peace — a sweet soul, who lived sixteen years and five months — a soul sweet as honey: this epitaph was made by her parents — the sign, a ship.

The tomb of Dracontius exhibits a dragon; that of Onager, an ass.* The author has great pleasure in being able to contribute, to the small number of phonetics already published, the annexed, from the Lapidarian Gallery. A fragment only has been copied, the entire inscription being long.

* Boldetti, Bottari, &c.

PONTIVS · LEO · S · EBIV
ET PONTIA · M
FECERVNT · FI



— Pontius Leo, and Pontia Maxima his wife. The former while living, bought this tomb. Their sons set up this.

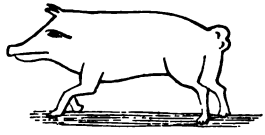
Two well-known instances are those of Doliens and Porcella: the first is not decisive, as the cask occasionally appears elsewhere:

IVLIO FILIO PATER DOLIENS

— Doliens the father, to Julius his son —

Dolium is the Latin for cask; Porcella signifies a little pig, as in the next:

PORCELLA HIC DORMIT
IN P · QVIXIT ANN · III M · X
D · XIII.



Here sleeps Porcella in peace. She lived three years, ten months, and thirteen days.

The animals here represented must have considerably embarrassed the older writers: by them Leo would have been invested with the honours of martyrdom; and the means of his death assumed to be the lions of the Coliseum. But the pig and cask,

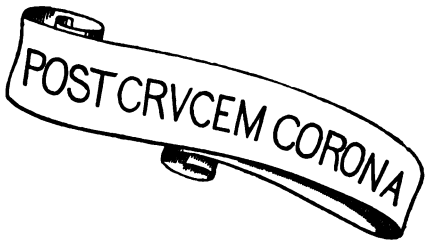
the ass and the dragon, must have puzzled all but writers like Gallonius, whose love of the horrible would doubtless have invented unheard-of tortures to explain the symbols, and embodied them in engravings of fearful aspect.

Besides the signs employed by the orthodox, there were others, of Gnostic origin: some of these, by their glaring inconsistency with the pure spirit of Christianity, exemplify the doctrines condemned by the apostles, as introduced by depraved teachers.

If it be true that the ancient Christians, with the intention of disguising their religion from the Pagans, adapted to the new creed many of the symbols belonging to the old, — if, as asserted by Hope,* they sought out such signs as should seem Gentile to the Gentiles, though evidently Christian to their fellow-believers, — then, it must be confessed they so far fulfilled this end as to have completely deceived many antiquarians of after times. By being "all things to all men" in this respect, they have furnished to the Protestant, as well as to the infidel, a strong argument against the Christian character of their places of worship, dwellings, and sepulchres. Who would expect, in the Bacchanalian scenery of a sculptured sarcophagus, to find an allusion to the vineyard of the Lord, or to the wine consecrated to sacramental purposes? The same spirit of accommodation is elsewhere visible. "Diana's Stag," says Hope, "became the Christian soul thirsting for the living waters: Juno's Peacock, under the name of

* Essay on Architecture.

the Phœnix, that soul after the resurrection." It may be that disguise did not furnish the principal motive for choosing those equivocal emblems: perhaps more may be attributed to poverty of invention. This fact, however, is certain, that the symbols became more and more tangible, we may say more adapted to a gross conception, in proportion as Christianity became more established and secure from insult. The horrible desecration of an altar and its appendages, attributed to Julian the apostate, justifies the caution of the earlier believers in the concealment of their sacred rites.



CHAPTER VI.

THE OFFICES AND CUSTOMS OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

THE highest office in the primitive Church of Rome was that of bishop—the episcopus, or papa. The last title, literally signifying Father, though since become limited in its use, was originally applied to bishops in general. In all the epistles addressed to Cyprian by the Roman clergy, the bishop of Carthage is styled "the blessed pope Cyprian." The form is preserved by our Church in the words "Most Reverend Father in God." Jerome also applies the word Papa to the head of a monastery. The title is found in an epitaph in the Lapidarian Gallery.

PERPETVAM · SEDEM NVTRITOR POSSIDES IPSE
HIC MERITVS FINEM MAGNIS DEFVNCTE PERICLIS
HIC REQVIEM FELIX SVMIS COGENTIBUS ANNIS
HIC POSITVS PAPA SANTIMIOO VIXIT ANNIS LXX
DEPOSITVS DOMINO NOSTRO ARCADIO II ET FL
RVFINO
VVCCSS NONAS NOBEMB.

You, our nursing-father, occupy a perpetual seat, being dead, and deserving an end of your great dangers. Here happy, you find rest, bowed down with years. Here lies the most holy Pope, who lived 70 years. Buried on the nones of November, our Lords Arcadius for the second time, and Flavius Rufinus, being Consuls.

The date of this consulate is fixed at 392, in which year no bishop of Rome died. Siricius was made pope in 385, and lived to 396. Yet the re-

ference to a perpetual *seat*, added to the title *papa sanctissimus*, strongly indicates episcopal rank.

Of the many innovations forced upon Christendom by the Church of Rome, the doctrine of the supremacy of her bishop is among the most surprising and unfounded. Without entering into the history of its origin, enough may be here brought forward to show that the Church connected with the Catacombs never claimed such rank among her neighbours. Not only did Cyprian call together two synods and a council at Carthage, without the concurrence of Stephen the Roman bishop, but, in those assemblies, resolutions were passed in direct opposition to Stephen, and Firmilian lamented his obstinacy in not yielding sooner to the voice of the Church.*

At the same time it seems to have been allowed by all parties concerned, that St. Peter, speaking, and being addressed, in the name of the twelve, was the rock spoken of by our Lord as the foundation of His Church †; that he was afterwards bishop of Rome; that he was the "senior of the apostolic college;" and that from him all bishops, whether

* Epistle 75.—Cyprian does not omit to cite St. Peter's submission to St. Paul, as an action worthy the imitation of his successors, the bishops in general.—Ep. 71.

† Epistle 71.—A hundred years afterwards Chrysostom explained the "rock" to be the confession made by St. Peter.—Exposition of St. Matthew, chap. 16. Augustine, at different times, explains it as the apostle, his faith, and our Lord. Some modern commentators have founded on the difference of gender in Greek, an argument against the identity of Peter and the "rock:" this difficulty does not seem to have been discovered in the Greek age of the Church.

in Africa or in Italy, derived their succession. Thus Cyprian, in his 33d Epistle, deduces his authority from St. Peter, with as much confidence as if the apostle had been a bishop of Carthage; and throughout the episcopal correspondence of that time, there is no trace of any superiority allowed to or claimed by Rome, beyond what precedence might naturally be granted, in consideration of her metropolitan importance.

The idea of universal episcopacy did not first originate in the Roman see; for Cyriacus, bishop of Constantinople at the end of the sixth century, endeavoured to secure that dignity for himself. On the day of his nomination to the patriarchate, his friends raised in the congregation the cry, "This is the day which the Lord hath made." On the news reaching Rome, Gregory congratulated the Constantinopolitans on the accession of so valuable a leader, and mildly reproved them for the misapplication of a prophecy only referring to our Lord.

Cyriacus having made this beginning, did not wait long before putting forward a claim to the title of universal bishop, a step to which Gregory objected, as likely to give general offence, and to cause schism; besides incurring the risk of a dangerous fall, since "he that exalteth himself shall be abased." The friends of Cyriacus complained of these expressions as harsh, and pressed the obnoxious claim; Gregory vainly entreating that it might be relinquished, "lest Antichrist, not far

distant, should find any thing in the Church, if only in name." When his exhortations still proved ineffectual, the Roman bishop refused to allow his deacon to communicate with Cyriacus; though with characteristic humility he partook of the Eucharist with the messengers of Cyriacus, not wishing to involve any part of the Church in the offence of one man. His final protest deserves to be perpetuated by every writer of ecclesiastical history: "I tell you confidently, that whoever styles himself, or wishes to be styled, universal priest, does in his self-exaltation anticipate Antichrist, setting up himself in pride above his fellows."*

During the fifth and sixth centuries the bishop of Rome possessed an extensive jurisdiction in Southern Italy: he was patriarch of 240 dioceses, and metropolitan of 110†; and was, moreover, universally respected, as the most influential prelate of the West. Unsatisfied with this, the successors of Gregory grasped at the forbidden fruit of supreme

* "Ego autem fidenter dico quia quisque se universalem sacerdotem vocat, vel vocari desiderat, in elatione suâ Antichristum præcurrit, quia superbiendo se ceteris præponit."—Gregorii Maximi Epist. lib. vii. ep. vii. to xxxiii. It should be observed here, that Gregory does not say that the title was a mark of Antichrist, or that the "man of sin" would be a pretender to universal priesthood. Compare the inspired words, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It is but just to the Benedictine editors to mention that they have honestly retained this embarrassing passage, and drawn due attention to it in their excellent index. This is the more praiseworthy, as the Vatican copy omits the entire epistle, as well as the one following it.

† Palmer on the Church, part vii. chap. 7.

dominion; the fatal consequences of which were fully revealed in apostolic times: "She saith in her heart, I sit a queen: *therefore* shall her plagues come in one day."

Although almost all historians agree in styling St. Peter the first bishop of Rome, there is some reason for doubting whether the title is strictly applicable to him. It is against the spirit of the apostles' commission, to suppose them localised in any part of the Church: they were directed to "go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature;" and upon this injunction they acted, journeying assiduously in every direction. The twelve appear to have shared among them the duties of *universal* episcopacy: a mode of government not intended to continue after their death, and soon rendered impracticable by the increasing extent of the Church. Accordingly we find their immediate successors settled in large cities and districts, with the authority and title of bishop: Mark in Alexandria, Titus in Crete, and Timothy in Ephesus. The few sees established by the apostles soon rose into archiepiscopal importance: even Crete, at first consigned to the care of Titus, is now divided into twelve bishoprics. But we seek in vain for the dioceses of James and John, Paul and Bartholomew, who, though they sometimes resided for years in the same city, recognised no geographical limits to their sphere of labour.

Of this nature it may be supposed was the connection between St. Peter and the city of the

Cæsars: an opinion strengthened by the apostle's attempt to flee from it during a persecution. This circumstance, disfigured by legendary addition, is still firmly credited in Rome, and is recorded in an inscription placed in the church of "Domine, quo vadis?" According to the tradition there preserved, St. Peter had just left Rome by the Appian way, when our Lord met him: (A.D. 66.) in answer to the apostle's inquiry, "Lord, whither goest thou?" He replied, "I go again to Rome to be crucified." St. Peter acknowledged the reproof, and retraced his steps: his own crucifixion followed almost immediately. The impression of our Lord's footsteps in the pavement, or rather a copy, is pretended to be shown in the church.*

The style of bishops was never more magnificent than in the fifth century. At the Council of Ephesus, such titles as this were given: Cyrillus, sanctissimus, sacratissimus, ac Deo devotissimus, pater noster et episcopus. The word papa seldom occurs in the records of councils, being usually employed in *addressing* a bishop or superior.

The bishops of Rome were all buried in the catacombs till the time of Leo I., who died in 462. He was interred in the vestibule of the Sacristy of St. Peter's. From that time we may trace the

* Besides the usual difficulties attendant upon the belief of such legends, we must in this case get over the miraculous preservation of the surface of the stone in that great thoroughfare; or at least the impracticability of removing the stone during the persecution: the Appian way being laid down with hexagonal blocks, very thick, and admirably cemented to the ground.

decline of the subterranean cemeteries in public estimation. During the troubles that followed, most of their entrances and windings seem to have been lost, excepting a few branches of easy access which remained open, and were still embellished with the ornaments suggested by a debased taste.

About the time of Decius, the Church in Rome was provided with one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, forty-two acolyths, or waiters, and fifty-two exorcists, readers, and door-keepers. In this enumeration, taken from a letter of Cornelius, bishop of Rome, preserved by Eusebius, the fossors do not seem to be included. Of the presbyters, we have one inscription:

LOCVS BASILI PRESB ET FELICITATI EIVS
SIBI FECERVNT

To Basilus the presbyter, and Felicitas his wife. They made this for themselves. (Fabretti.)

The epitaph of a lector, or reader, also married, is given by Fabretti:

CLAVDIVS · ATTICIA
NVS · LECTOR
ET CLAVDIA
FELICISSIMA
COIVX

The lectors were generally ordained very young, and were promoted to other offices in course of time. They were a class somewhat resembling our choristers, and were employed to read the Scriptures aloud in the Church. Cyprian mentions making trial of the reading of Saturus on Easter-

day*, before his ordination. Gruter gives the epitaph of one Atticus Proculus, aged 18. R. Rochette mentions one of 13, in France. The Lapidarian Gallery has an inscription to one still younger:

LOCVS AVGVSTI
LECTORIS DEBELA
BRV
DEPSVRICAγXGKALγ
AVGγ
QVE VIXIT ANNOS·
PMXIICONS
SEBERINI

Read, for Dep. suricâ, Depositus soricâ, from σορος. Vide Ainsworth's index alter, sub voce.

The place of Augustus, Lector in the Velabrum, buried in a mound on the 15th Kalends of August. He lived twelve years, more or less. In the consulate of Severinus; *i. e.* in the year 461.

The Velabrum is a part of Rome, containing the Forum Boarium, Arch of Janus, and Cloaca Maxima.

Aringhi has preserved a remarkable inscription to the wife of a priest:

LEVITAE CONIVNX PETRONIA FORMA PVDORIS
HIS MEA DEPONENS SEDIBVS OSSA LOCO
PARCITE VOS LACRIMIS DVLCES CVM CONIVGE
NATAE
VIVENTEMQVE DEO CREDITE FLERE NEFAS
DP IN PACE III NON OCTOBRIS FESTO VC CONSS

Petronia, a priest's wife, the type of modesty.—In this place I lay my bones; spare your tears, dear husband and daughters, and believe that it is forbidden to weep for one who lives in

* Epistle 29.

God. Buried in peace, on the 3rd Nones of October, in the consulate of Festus (*i. e.* in 472.)

The Eastern consul is omitted: yet, from the carelessness of the sculptor, the abbreviation CONSS is left plural.

The next is from Gruter:

D · M ·
VALERIVS · QVI
VIXIT · IN · SAECVLO
ANN · XI · M · X · D · V ·
IANVARIVS · EXORCISTA
SIBI · ET · CONIVGI · FECIT ·

This is an instance of the appropriation of a heathen tombstone by a Christian. The latter half of the inscription signifies: "Januarius the exorcist made this for himself and his wife."

Another epitaph of a married member of the clerical order, though of lower rank, is that of Terentius, in the Lapidarian Gallery:

TERENTIVS · FOSOR
PRIMITIVE · COIVGI
ET · SIVI .

Terentius the fossor, for Primitiva his wife and himself.

The title fossor is here mis-spelt ; it should have been as in the following fragment: (Lap. Gall.)

SFELIX FOSSOR
IXIT ANNIS LXIII
TVS XII KAL IANVARIAS

Felix the fossor, &c.

The fossors, whose office has been already described, were also called Copiatæ, and Lecticarii. They are noticed in history from time to time, and their office appears to have been retained among the lower clerical grades till a late period. It is

related of Huss the Martyr, that before his execution he was degraded from all his orders in succession: priesthood, deaconship, subdeaconship, acolyteship, and the offices of exorcist, *sexton*, and bene't. (Foxe's Martyrology.)

It has been said by some Romanists that the fossors were established by the apostles, and that their order numbered those young men who carried out the bodies of Ananius and Sapphira Almost as unfounded is the statement that Constantine created 950 fossors, whom he exempted from taxes and service. In the fierce contention which arose between rival bishops, A.D. 366, the fossors were employed by Damasus, together with the charioteers and gladiators, to storm the Lateran Basilica.*

Of the exorcists, we know but little: a belief in demoniacal possession was universal at that time, and demons were supposed to be cruelly tortured by the approach of martyrs' ashes. To this cause Jerome attributes the contempt for relics shown by Vigilantius: "He is grieved that the remains of martyrs should be covered with a precious cloth, instead of being wrapped in rags, and thrown upon a dunghill: so that Vigilantius alone, drunk and asleep, should be worshipped. For demons, such as inhabit Vigilantius, howl at those relics, and confess a perception of their presence."† It would be easy to collect references to the real or fancied

* Ducange, sub voce Fossor.

† Heiron. adv. Vigilantium.

sufferings of the demons on such occasions. "You may observe them," says Cyprian to Donatus, "when we adjure them by the living and true God, howling, lamenting, bewailing, as if they were whipped with rods, or tortured by fire, or extended upon a rack." Between the numerous exorcists, and the relics of so many martyrs, demons must have been much straitened in their operations upon members of the Church.

The two following are from Boldetti:

ACATIVS PASTOR

LOCUS EXVPERANTI
DIACON

The place of Exuperantius the deacon.

Private individuals were honoured with various titles expressive of their Christian profession; as, servant of God, friend of all men:

CVRRENTIO
SERVO DEI
DEP · DXVI
KAL · NOU ·

To Currentius, servant of God. (Lap. Gall.)

MAXIMINVSQV
IVIXIT ANNOS XXIII
AMICVS OMNIVM

Maximinus, who lived 23 years; friend of all men.

This eulogy is sometimes found in Greek.

Ε ΚΑΛΑΝ ΝΟΕΝΒ.
ΕΚΟΙΜΗΘΗ ΓΟΡΓΟΝΙC
ΠΑCΙΦΙΛΟC ΚΑΙ ΟΥΔΕΝΙ
ΕΧΘΡΟC

In Christ. On the 5th Kalends of November, slept Gorgonius, friend of all, and enemy to none.

Among Christian women of the third and fourth centuries, widows and virgins formed separate bodies, subject to different laws. These appellations, however, were only applied to persons who had voluntarily fixed upon celibacy or widowhood; and not to such as had left themselves at liberty to change their condition when opportunity offered. A few of their epitaphs still remain:

FVRIA HELPIS
VIRGO DEVOTA

Furia Elpis, a consecrated virgin.

Of the travelling virgins, such as the one whose epitaph is here copied, (Lap. Gall.) we know nothing:

AESTONIA VIRGO PEREGRI
NA QVE VIXIT ANIS XL · I · ET · DS ·
VIII · IIII · KAL · MAR · DECESSIT
DE CORPORE

In Christ. Aestonia, a travelling virgin, who lived forty-one years and eight days. She departed from the body on the 4th Kalends of March.

The term *peregrinus* was applied to such persons as were received by distant churches while journeying. This mode of admitting them to communion did not amount to an absolute recognition of their orthodoxy, and consequently could not be abused by heretics.

The title "handmaid of God," used by Tertullian in opposition to "handmaid of the devil," seems to be applied to a consecrated virgin in the instance here adduced, the epitaph of Aurelia:

AVRELIA AGAPETILLA ANCILLA
DEI QVAE DORMIT IN PACE VIXIT ANN
XXI · M · III · DIIII · PATER FECIT

Aurelia Agapetilla, the handmaid of God: who sleeps in peace. She lived twenty-one years, three months, and four days. Her father set up this.

The age of twenty-one is beyond the usual period of marrying among Roman women: and it is clear that Aurelia was not married, by the fact being unrecorded, as well as by her burial being left to her father.

Widows who had devoted the rest of their days to the service of God were often designated by a particular title. The following is cemented into the wall of the Vatican library:

OC - TA - VI - AE - MA · TRO - NAE -
VI - DV - AE - DE - I.

To Octavia, a matron, widow of God.

Consecrated women were afterwards called ministræ. The Council of Chalcedon forbad any to be made such under the age of forty: the learned Fathers give their reasoning on the subject; it will be found, by the curious reader, in Harduin.

The monuments described in the present chapter, selected from the mass of remains either published or exhibited in the Vatican, illustrate two subjects: the existence of a regular clergy, filling a variety of offices, of all ages, married and single; and the introduction of an aristocracy of female virtue, professing to rise above the *profanum vulgus* of married life. In itself, there is perhaps nothing more calculated to raise our estimation of the

early Church, than the fact, that thousands of persons, of both sexes, were found ready to devote themselves to the service of God in singleness of life and voluntary poverty. Too earnest in seeking the kingdom of heaven, to allow the comforts of domestic life to impede their progress, they seem to stand by themselves, a mighty monument of fervent piety: something to be looked up to; to be honoured: more easily admired than imitated. These persons were boasted of, by the Church, as her jewels, her necklace, her peculiar treasure:

Cernis sacratas virgines,
Miraris intactas anus
Primique post damnum thori
Ignis secundi nescias.
Hoc est monile Ecclesiæ!
His illa gemmis comitur!
Dotata sic Christo placet!
Sic ornat altum verticem.*

The Church compared her tens of thousands of virgins with the half-dozen vestals, the only parallel which Paganism could display.† But, unfortunately, the great patrons of this system, the Fathers themselves, reluctantly display it in another light. On this subject it is difficult to hold any middle opinion: we may look to the brighter side alone, and admire; but if we once question the reality of the holiness professed, and inquire into the practical working of the institution, "to be once in doubt, is—once to be resolved." Open Cyprian,

* Prudentius, Peristephanon. Hymn 3.

† Prud. cont. Symmachum, lib. 2.

Jerome, or Basil, and the halo fades from the brow of ecclesiastical celibacy: like the soil of a decayed sepulchre, it bears some fair flowers, but not enough to conceal the loathsome remains that nourish their unnatural bloom.

Very few epitaphs of persons devoted to celibacy are to be found in the Lapidarian Gallery; apparently because the monastic spirit made slower progress in Rome than elsewhere. It is certain that Egypt took the lead in this particular, and Carthage was not very far behind it.

Whatever purity of intention belonged to the earliest votaries of monasticism, it is to be feared that the end proposed by the monks and nuns of the Nicene age was to purchase, by its means, the highest rewards that Heaven could bestow. To be saved by the blood of Christ, was humbling, when salvation could be bought by a species of self-sacrifice. A new passport to eternal glory, and one which conferred upon its possessor great earthly honour, was the premium upon a single life. In examining into the merits of this system, we must distinguish between the forced celibacy of the clergy, and the voluntary self-dedication of lay persons to the service of God. The one is almost forbidden by St. Paul (let the bishop be the husband of one wife); the other receives from him a certain degree of encouragement: "There is this difference between a wife and a virgin; the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit; but

she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." As long, then, as the time and means redeemed from secular matters were suitably employed in the service of the Lord, the pious devotee came under the sanction of the apostolic declaration. From a very early period, women, rather than men, availed themselves of the leisure so obtained, and for some time supported their profession without scandal or inconvenience to the Church. Whether the honour paid to them induced others, not possessing the requisite devotion, to join their number, or whether the system was in itself only adapted to the apostolic age, the institution of celibacy degenerated, in a short time, beyond all hope of recovery. The first serious blow to its character was given by the nuns of Carthage, in the third century: their manners disgraced the community, and reflected discredit upon the whole African Church. To reform this anomalous and disorderly body was the difficult task of Cyprian, who spared neither threats nor entreaties to bring them to a sense of their short comings. With the loftiness of their calling, exaggerated, it must be confessed, by the application of some irrelevant passages of Scripture, he contrasts their inordinate love of paint and jewellery, habit of frequenting the public baths, and general anxiety to render attractive to the world their persons, which they had devoted to Heaven: "You presumptuously dye your hair, and with an ill omen to your future condition, you labour to make

it flame-coloured. * * * * If you will lay a bait for catching others,— if you put in their way occasions of sin,— however sober your professions are, your mind is polluted, and you cannot be accounted guiltless." *

Already was the profession of celibacy beginning to be ranked among the cardinal virtues of Christianity; in the next age it took precedence of them: we hear little more of the motive, "that she may please the Lord," the only argument from Scripture in its favour: and if the condition of those who vowed a single life be taken as a test of the merits of the system, it will go very hard with its supporters. It must be either a positive command, or some prodigious spiritual advantage, that can justify the encouragement of vowed celibacy in the face of its mischievous consequences. Let us hear what dangerous language was employed regarding it in the fourth century:

"It were endless," says Jerome, "to expound the parable of the ten virgins, five wise, and five foolish: this only will I say, that whereas, on the one hand, virginity alone, without other good works, will not save; so all good works, without virginity, purity, continence, and chastity, are imperfect."

"What others will hereafter be in heaven, that the virgins have begun to be upon earth. * * *

* For an exposure of greater enormities enacted by the nuns, may be consulted the Epistle to Pomponius. The observations of Cyprian resemble those of Othello, act iv. sc. 1.

† Jerome, Adv. Jovinianum, lib. i. cap. 25.

Peter was an apostle, John an apostle; one married, the other single: but Peter was only an apostle; John, an apostle, evangelist, and prophet. * * * For this reason John, the single, expounds what the married could not: 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.' For this reason Christ consigned to John's charge the Virgin mother (a Domino virgine, mater virgo virgini discipulo commendatur). For this cause (quia virgo permansit) was he more beloved of the Lord, and reclined upon his bosom."

With such views to influence the laity, it cannot surprise us to find this royal road to heaven crowded with pilgrims, who found their account partly in the honour paid to them in this world, and partly, as they fondly hoped, in the privileges ensured to them in the next. Perhaps no tenet mixed up with Christianity has more tended to obscure the doctrines of the Cross than that of celibacy: the gospel, if preached to the poor, the profligate, and the married, scarcely finds its way into the patristic addresses to more exalted professors of sanctity. These had passed the broad line between the sinner and the saint, and inherited while living the honours of their predecessors, the martyrs and confessors of a former age. That illustrious body, extinct with the spirit of persecution necessary to its continuance, left a blank in the Church of the fourth century, only to be filled by some new order of spiritual knighthood. Celibacy, promoted to the post of honour just vacated, supplied

the desideratum: and despite the strange difference between the two methods of self-sacrifice, their glory was equal, and the rank conferred by both, in a remarkable degree identical. Of this fact a proof is found in the successive explanations of the parable of the sower, which was pushed beyond the meaning attached to it by our Saviour, and made to register degrees of virtue upon an artificial scale. The hundred-bearing seed, no longer merely representing the obedient hearer of the word, personified the fervid aspirant to martyrdom or celibacy, whose zeal had reached the boiling-point in pursuit of heavenly honour. The sixty-fold produce was that of the less ardent; the thirty-fold included the temperate, perhaps the lukewarm, professor. While persecution lasted, martyrdom occupied the highest place on the scale: "The first increase is a hundred-fold," says Cyprian, writing to the nuns of Carthage, "and this truly belongs to martyrs; but the next, which is sixty-fold, to you."* After the the time of Diocletian, some alteration was necessary, in order to preserve the highest order of sanctity in the Church: the bold invention of Jerome supplied the want. "The thirty-fold," he decided, "refers to marriage; the sixty-fold, to widowhood; but the hundred-fold expresses the crown of virginity."†

* The accumulated fruitfulness of virgin-martyrs thus exceeded the gospel maximum: "In them the hundred-fold is added to the fruit of sixty-fold." — Cyp. Ep. 76. This seems a proof of the incorrectness of that interpretation.

† Ad Ageruchiam.

But we are not yet entitled to disallow the merits of ecclesiastical celibacy, having hitherto only examined one side of it. We have, indeed, seen Scripture misapplied on its behalf, the doctrine of the Atonement obscured, and the Church scandalised by the ruin of some unworthy aspirants to its honours; but we have not yet glanced at the many who profited by it: in the state of those whom it raised to the highest pinnacle of the temple, we must look for a set-off to these inconveniences. It is true, some may argue, mischief was done to individuals: there was much meaning in Jerome's caution — "It were better to have walked in lowly paths — to have submitted to marriage, than, attempting a higher ascent, to fall into the depths of hell."* But if the introduction of a new and more exalted mode of holiness has proved fatal to some, whose faith was unequal to the trial, what blame shall their failure cast upon the inventor? — "It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

Let us, however, scrutinise a little the character of those favoured ones, at the shrine of whose perfection the souls and bodies of their fellow Christians were offered: then shall we judge better how far their gain was worth the sacrifice. Of all the Fathers none can be found more madly devoted to celibacy than Jerome: "I love to praise marriage," he exclaims, in one of his mildest moments,

* Ad Eustochium.

"because it supplies us with virgins; of those thorns we gather roses." He was the *director*, if we may use the title by anticipation, of the most distinguished devotees of his time. It will therefore be doing no injustice to the system, if we take as tolerably accurate his description of its votaries. Let us hear him, in the confidence of friendship, setting forth their characters:

"Their weak point is the love of praise: there are extremely few free from this. * * * Some of them, women, go about disfigured, that they may appear to fast: when they see any one approaching, they begin to sigh and look down; then they cover the face, leaving only a peep-hole for one eye: their clothes indeed are ragged, their girdle is of sackcloth, their hands and feet are dirty." Still, in spite of these promising appearances, their religion is but skin-deep, "for within, where man sees not, they are surfeited with food."

"As for the men," he cautions Eustochium, "when you see any with hair like women, beards like goats, a black cloak, and feet exposed to the cold, — avoid them: all these things are marks of the devil. Of that description were Antimus and Sophronius, who entered noble houses, and there deceived silly women laden with sins, &c." * * *

"Others there are, who have entered orders with the view of enjoying, more at their ease, female society. Their only care is dress, perfume, and the neat appearance of their feet: their hair, curled with an iron, waves as they walk; for fear of contracting

mud, they step on tiptoe: if you saw them, you would take them for bridegrooms, rather than priests."

"But there is one," pursues Jerome, warming with his subject, "there is one, a master of his art, whom I must sketch, for fear you should say I deal in general satire only. He rises early, and hastens to his work; visits people scarcely awake, and intrudes himself almost into their chambers. If he sees a cushion, a handsome table-cover, or other piece of furniture, he approves it; is struck by it, handles it, and laments that he does not possess such a thing himself; and so rather extorts than fairly obtains it, for the women all fear to offend the great man (veredarius) of the city."

But what impression does this enthusiastic monk convey of his best specimens of the class? His letters to some of those women remain: there is but one difficulty in the way of their being generally read, that no person will venture to print in English such a mass of indecency, until perhaps some attempt to introduce vows of celibacy among us shall provoke their publication. They remain a fearful monument of the social effects of the system. Amidst elaborate, and far from spiritual, interpretations of Solomon's Song,—amidst fulsome eulogies of the nuns, and dissertations upon their peculiar relationship to the Bridegroom,—the religion and the Christ of the New Testament seem missing: the Lord of life is departed; the grave-clothes alone remain to show the place where He lay.

Single women, under the title of *subintroductæ*, were for a long time suffered to live in the houses of unmarried priests. The councils very early interfered with this custom, and generally limited the permission to a daughter, aunt, or sister. The daughter was omitted in course of time, as celibacy previous to ordination became binding. "I observe with grief of heart," says Cyprian, "that this unlawful and dangerous intercourse has corrupted the purity of numbers."* So Jerome: "Whence arose the pest of the Agapetæ?"† — a name given to them in conformity with the expression of St. Paul, Περσις ἡ αγαπητη, 'the beloved Persis."

The rules laid down for the observance of those who professed celibacy, were extremely strict: "I desire," says Jerome to Rusticus, "that you will not live in your mother's house, chiefly, lest when she offers you delicate food, you should grieve her by refusal; or by receiving it, should add oil to the flame. * * * * Let your hands and eyes be never without a book. Learn the Psalter word for word. Pray incessantly. * * * * Undertake some labour, that the devil may always find you occupied."‡

"When you visit your mother, see that she introduce you to no other women, whose countenance might impress your heart, and leave a secret wound. Especially beware of her handmaids: their humble condition leaves them and you less protected."

* Ad Pomponium, cap. 1. † Ad Eustochium, cap. 5.
‡ Ad Rusticum Monachum, cap. 5.

His directions to Eustochium are of the same description: "Seldom appear in public, but supplicate the Martyrs in your own chamber. You will always find an excuse for going out, if you allow any excuses whatever. * * * Let sleep surprise you, book in hand; and let the sacred page support your nodding head."

In the Apostolic age, marriage appears to have been reckoned rather a qualification for the ministry than otherwise. The being able to govern well a family, was looked upon as a pledge that the candidate for orders was not deficient in those domestic and social virtues that befit a bishop and a priest. "A bishop." enjoins St. Paul, "must be blameless, the husband of one wife. * * * Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife."

The practice of after times gradually changed. The Council of Neocesarea, A.D. 314, ordained that a presbyter marrying after ordination should be deposed: he was also forbidden to marry a second time, though his having a wife was not an objection to his entering the ministry. The Council of Nice, held in 325, was not far from imposing celibacy on the clergy. Paphnutius, an old Egyptian bishop, resisted the proposed decree, and delivered the first ecumenical council from the stigma of having enforced this innovation. The Council of Elvira forbad all orders of the priesthood to marry: at the same time it allowed the clergy to maintain in their houses a sister, or dedicated virgin daughter: whether daughter of the Church, or of the priest himself, is not clear.

The decrees of councils, and the opinions of the Fathers, on this point, would fill a volume: it will be sufficient to quote the Quinisextan canons, A.D. 706, to show how slowly forced celibacy invaded Christendom: "If any presbyter or deacon put away his wife, under pretence of piety, let him be excommunicated: if he persevere, be deposed." This canon refers to a detestable custom of abandoning wives and families on taking orders.

The original Agape, or love-feast, was a truly Catholic element of ancient Christianity. Begun in the purest spirit, it shared the fate of some other ordinances, till in the fifth century it became a scandal to all Christendom. It is first mentioned by St. Jude, in the passage, "These are spots in your agapæ," εν ταις αγαπαις ὑμων, translated in our version, "feasts of charity." The feast, as held in the Catacombs, is represented in a picture found in a subterranean chapel, in the cemetery of Marcellinus and Peter.

In this painting the three guests are seen seated, and a page supplies them with food from the small round table in front, containing a lamb and a cup. The two matrons who preside, personifying Peace and Love, have their names written above their heads, according to the Etruscan practice.

The inscriptions should be read: Irene — Da calda(m aquam); and, Agape — Misce mi (vinum cum aquâ). "Peace, Give hot water; Love, Mix me wine." The custom of mixing water with wine was almost universal among the ancients: sometimes the water was iced, sometimes warm, and occasionally of the natural temperature:

"Caldam poscis aquam, sed nondum frigida venit."

You ask for hot water, but the cold has not yet come," says Martial: and again,

"Frigida non desit, non deerit calda petenti."

"Here let there be cold water, the hot will come when called for."

The table containing provisions was named *cibilla*, from *cibus*, food.

In a city rich as imperial Rome in historical associations, where the very stones are piled in chronological succession, among triumphal arches and trophies, among the ruins of temples and palaces, can the miserable painting of a subterranean cell offer any thing worthy the attention of the traveller? Let us try.

In a dismal cavern, only accessible to the well-provided explorer, among tombs and vaulted chambers, where every thing bears marks of high anti-

quity, is found a rudely-designed picture, attributed by the most skilful connoisseurs to the third or fourth century; and this on excellent grounds: its style marks the decline of art soon after the time of the Antonines: its subject is connected with a religion not brought to Rome before the reign of Nero, and which did not employ painting till the third century. The ceremony it represents was almost universally discontinued in the fifth, and the pictorial details closely correspond with the descriptions left by the poets of the Augustan age. The design, so carefully finished in its parts, and every where abounding in information, is generally wrong in perspective, and destitute of taste: in short, nothing is wanting to prove its authenticity to any one conversant with ancient art of an inferior class.

These facts are established by the picture: that in the third or fourth century, certain persons, either from choice or from necessity, selected caves in the neighbourhood of Rome, and devoted much attention to embellishing them. One of the subjects there painted was a solemn feast, at which Peace and Love were supposed to preside. This is so often repeated in sculptures and paintings, that the ceremony must have been common, and some time established. Who are these peaceful refugees, apparently too gentle for the iron times of Decius and Diocletian? To what system of philosophy belong those magic words, Irene and Agape, altogether strange to heathenism, and indicating by their Greek form an Eastern origin? But

one answer can be given to these questions. The most malignant sceptic must confess that the ancient Church in Rome, pacific and defenceless as it here appears, did conquer the proud array of Pagan and Imperial power: and the Christian, forced to admit a Divine interposition in behalf of his religion, beholds therein a testimony from Heaven to its truth. Yet more, that religion, here seen through the vista of fifteen centuries, presents the same unworldly aspect as in the sacred writings: a joyful serenity, worth all the jarrings of Chalcedon, or the proud seraphism of the Thebaid.

The feast, at first held as a part of regular religious worship, was in course of time reserved for marriages and deaths. At length the anniversaries of martyrdom became the chief occasion of its celebration. These days were called *natalitia*, or birthdays, because the saints were then born to heaven from the world. As long as persecution was likely to befall the Church, there was policy in commemorating annually the triumphs of her heroes. To meet by lamplight over the grave of a departed friend, and there to animate each other's faith by mutual exhortations; to partake together of the funereal meal before the tablet which covered his bones; in all this the faithful of that age found a constant stimulus to fortitude and zeal. But the natalitia, celebrated after the conversion of Constantine, tended to secularise religious worship in a lamentable degree: the festival was thrown open in the hope of obtaining converts; and many of the

Pagan poor, after having been fed at the expense of the Church, became suddenly convinced of the truth of Christianity.

The Agape was also further desecrated by a less justifiable measure—an attempt to replace the Pagan festivals by corresponding Christian solemnities. Augustine gives this account of the matter: "When peace was made, the crowd of Gentiles who were anxious to embrace Christianity, were deterred by this, that whereas they had been accustomed to pass the holidays in drunkenness and feasting before their idols, they could not easily consent to forego these most pernicious, yet ancient pleasures. It seemed good then to our leaders to favour this part of their weakness, and for those festivals which they relinquish, to substitute others, in honour of the holy martyrs, which they might celebrate with similar luxury, though not with the same impiety." *

To form a just idea of a ceremony so changed in character from age to age, we should consult the writers of each period in succession. St. Paul and St. Jude have spoken for the nature of the Agape in the first century; let us hear Tertullian while still orthodox, describing it in the second: "Its object," he says, "is evident from its name, which signifies brotherly love. In these feasts, therefore, we testify our love towards our poorer brethren, by relieving their wants. We commence the entertainment by offering up a prayer to God; and after

* Epist. xxix.

eating and drinking in moderation, we wash our hands, and lights being introduced, each individual is invited to address God in a Psalm, either taken from the Scriptures, or the produce of his own meditations. The feast concludes, as it began, with prayer."

Yet the same Tertullian, when prejudiced by Montanism, found another side to the question: "Your love boils — in the kettle; your faith glows — in the kitchen; your hope is placed — in the dish." He also adds some more serious charges.* It is strange that he who had once so nobly defended the purity of the Agape against heathen calumnies, (see his Apology,) should turn round upon it so bitterly. Perhaps his accusations were, at the time, unfounded; but in the middle of the fourth century, they would have fallen short of the truth.

The Council of Elvira prudently forbad women to pass the night in cemeteries.† At Antioch, dances were held round the tomb of the martyr‡: this was an acknowledged abuse, and seems to have been confined to that dissipated city. The Pagans, with some show of justice, asserted that these feasts were instituted to appease the manes of the dead. But, by this time, Rome had discontinued a custom so grossly perverted. The Fathers did their best to suppress the abuses, if not the feast itself. We have already heard Chrysostom reproving the

* De Jejun. Ad Psychicos, c. 17.

† Placuit prohiberi, ne feminæ in cemeteriis pervigilent, eo quod sæpè sub obtentu orationis, scelera latenter committant.

‡ Basil. appendix, sermon 19.

Constantinopolitans, by reminding them of the perils of a persecuted church. Augustine did not spare the Africans: "The martyrs," he exclaims, "hear your bottles, the martyrs hear your frying-pans, the martyrs hear your drunken revels." The Council of Laodicea condemned it altogether, Can. 28. Yet the custom lingered till the year 706, when the Quinisextan divines suppressed it entirely. "It is unlawful," they decreed, "to hold Agapæ, that is to say, feasts of charity, in the Lord's house, or in a church: also to eat within the building, and to place couches."

So popular did religious feasts become with the lower orders, that all bounds were transgressed in multiplying them: "These revels, and this drunkenness, are now thought so allowable," says Augustine, "as to be celebrated in honour of the blessed martyrs, not only on festivals, but every day." * Such irregularities deeply grieved the pious and amiable Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who painted Scripture subjects over the whole of his church, in order to edify the ignorant people who came together for the Agape of St. Felix. They greatly needed some interference of the authorities, for their bishop laments that these festivities were carried on through the entire night. "How I wish," he continues, "that their joys would assume a more sober character; that they would not mix their cups on holy ground. Yet I think we must not be too severe upon the pleasures of their little feasts; for error

* Epistle 64.

creeps into unlearned minds; and their simplicity, unconscious of the great fault they commit, verges on piety, supposing that the Saints are gratified by the wine poured on their tombs." *

With the Agapæ held over the grave of a martyr, we must not confound the sacramental mysteries celebrated in the same place, which afterwards degenerated into masses for the dead. A passage often quoted from Anastasius, represents Felix, bishop of Rome, in 270, as ordering mass to be celebrated at the memoriæ or tombs of the martyrs. Prudentius thus describes the connection between the high altar and the martyr's grave: —

"Illa sacramenti donatrix mensa — eadem que
Custos fida sui martyris apposita:
Servat ad æterni spem judicis ossa sepulchro,
Pascit item sanctis Tibricolas dapibus."

The same slab gives the sacrament, and faithfully guards the martyr's remains: it preserves his bones in the sepulchre in hope of the eternal judge, and feeds the Tibricolæ with sacred meat. Great is the sanctity of the place, and near at hand the altar for those who pray. †

In another passage, the custom of raising an altar over the bones is noticed: "But now that the enemy is subdued, and peace restored to the righteous, the altar furnishes a well-merited resting-place to the blessed bones. For, placed beneath the sanctuary, and hidden within the altar, they exhale around an odour of celestial gifts." ‡ And again —

"Sic venerarier ossa libet
Ossibus altar et impositum." §

* 9th Hymn to Felix. † Peristephanon. Hymn 4.
‡ Hymn. 2. 513. § Hymn 9.

So we may at once revere the bones, and the altar placed over them.

The Council of Gangra, A. D. 325, vehemently supported the custom of martyr masses: "If any one, puffed up by pride, should abhor the congregations held at the *confessions* of the martyrs, and execrate the ministrations, together with the confessions, let him be accursed." * The style of this anathema implies some strong opposition already made to the custom.

The number of causes contributing to make the Agape such as it was at different times, is remarkable. Beginning at first as an apostolic feast, perhaps held in imitation of our Saviour's last meal with his disciples (at least that part of it distinct from the sacramental institution), it was afterwards interwoven with the *silicernium*, feast of Hecate, or *cœna novemdialis* of the ancients, a funereal feast held nine days after a death.† Then the attempt to convert the Pagan poor by feeding them, and the substitution of martyr festivals for heathen solemnities, further lowered the character of the ceremony: at last we find it degraded to a mere revel; an opportunity for the commission of crime, mixed up with night-watchings, torchlight, and wine; forbidden by the Church, and entirely effaced from the ritual of Christendom.

* Version of Dionysius Exiguus. Canon 20.

† See on this subject Adams' Roman Antiquities, p. 485. In the silicernium, part of the food was laid upon the tomb, that the dead might seem to partake of it.

Whether the Agape generally preceded or followed the Lord's Supper, it is difficult to decide. It is gathered from passages in Tertullian and others, that the holy sacrament was received fasting; a practice at variance with the original institution, in which the bread and wine were consecrated by our Saviour towards the end of, or after, supper.

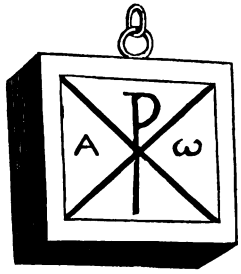
Of the origin of the appellation, missa or mass, Ducange gives a very clear account. The catechumens and unbelievers of ancient times, who were permitted to hear the Gospel and the Sermon which followed it, were dismissed from the Church before the celebration of the Communion. This sending out, or *missio*, as it was correctly designated, was announced in the words, Ite, missa est — Depart, it is the dismissal. The change of missio into missa is in accordance with expressions of Cyprian and Tertullian, who used remissa for remissio. The form of address was often changed: Si quis Catechumenus est, recedat: Omnes Catechumeni recedant foras*, &c. Προελθετε and απολνεσθε were used in the Greek Church. The dismissal afterwards gave its name to the entire service, and we read of the Mass of the Catechumens, or ante-Communion, and the Mass of the faithful, or Communion. By way of analogy with this derivation, Dr. Rock has cited the corruption of Dirige into

* Bishop Wilberforce, in the preface to his "Eucharistica," has availed himself of the ancient custom of dismissing the unbaptized, as an argument for the more regular communion of professing Christians in our own day.

Dirge, and Mandatum into Maundy Thursday. But he is less successful in proving the high antiquity of the word Missa, which he endeavours to trace back to the year 166: the letters of Popes belonging to that early age being far from unsuspected in point of genuineness.*

The custom of preserving a portion of the Sacramental bread, somewhat in the way of a talisman, is too well authenticated to allow of our doubting it. It is particularly alluded to by Cyprian, in relating the case of a woman who had, in the heat of persecution, sacrificed to a heathen deity. On her attempting, with sacrilegious hands, "to open the box in which she kept the holy supper (or body) of our Lord, she was deterred from proceeding any further in her bold attempt, by fire flashing out of it." †

Aringhi has given figures of two boxes found in the Vatican catacomb: they are supposed to have been used for containing the Eucharist, but their antiquity is probably not very great. One of them is here copied.



* Rock's Hierurgia. † De Lapsis.

We have a distinct statement of Cyprian's opinions regarding the Eucharist, in his 63d Epistle, written to Cæcilius, on a remarkable occasion. It had been advanced, by the Aquarian heretics, that wine, from its intoxicating quality, was unfit for the celebration of the Lord's Supper; and water was by them substituted for it. It must be borne in mind that the wine employed by the ancients at their meals was generally mixed with water when placed upon the table: it is therefore to this day a matter of doubt whether our Lord used pure wine, or wine and water, in the institution of the Supper. It is impossible to imagine any such opinion as that of the Aquarians arising in a church that held the doctrines of modern Rome: Cyprian's answer is also remarkable, and quite unintelligible, on the supposition that he believed in transubstantiation: "Whereas Christ hath said, 'I am the true vine,' how can ought but wine be his blood?—and how can the cup appear to contain blood, when destitute of that wine which throughout Scripture is the type of it?"

The names Irene and Agape were often given to Christian women. The next four epitaphs are in the Lapidarian Gallery:

IRENE · IN PACE
Irene in peace.
MATER AGAPE FECIT

Her mother Agape set up this. In Christ.

AGAPE VIBES
IN ETERNVM

For *vivas*.—Agape, may you live for ever. (The verb is here translated in the mood most usual in inscriptions.)

The dative case of Agape often occurs:

AGAPENI IN PACE

The word Irene stands for peace, in the next:

PRIMA IRENE
SOE

Prima, peace be to thee.

The baptismal rite was often performed below ground; and fonts have been discovered in some of the chapels. The subjoined fragment from the Lapidarian Gallery seems to have belonged to a subterranean baptistery:

CORPORIS ET CORDIS MACULAS VITALI
·PVRGAT ET OMNE SIMVL · ABLVITVND

The meaning of the entire inscription is clear: "The living stream cleanses the spots of body as well as of heart, and at the same time washes away all (sin)." The couplet is probably meant for a metrical comment upon the words, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."—Acts, xxii. 16.

If the custom of baptizing in cemeteries could be traced back as far as the time of St. Paul, it might be adduced in explanation of a passage of acknowledged difficulty in his writings: "What shall they do which are baptized for (or over) the dead—*υπερ των νεκρων*, if the dead rise not?" In the Roman catacombs, the initiatory rite was often performed in chapels, the floors of which contained graves.

We have already seen the epitaph of Jovina, a neophyte, three years old: another recorded instance of early baptism is that of Romanus, of the year 371:

ROMANO NEOFITO
BENEMERENTI QVI VI
XIT · ANNOS · VIII · DXV
REQVIESCIT IN PACE DN
FL GRATIANO · AVG · II ET
PETRONIO PROBO CS

Also that of Candidus, in the Lapidarian Gallery:

TEG · CANDIDVS NEOF
Q VXT · M XXI · DP NON
SEP

The tile of Candidus the neophyte, who lived twenty-one months: buried on the Nones of September.

In reading teg. as tegula, in defiance of the nominative Candidus, the author has followed the custom of Ainsworth, Facciolati, and Ursatus.* According to the latter, the word tegula indicates the presence of a tomb. Sepulchral tiles are referred to by Ovid†: "The manes of the dead demand but small offerings; to them piety is more acceptable than gorgeous presents: no greedy gods inhabit the Styx. It is enough to cover the tiles with garlands, and to scatter fruits with a little salt." These tiles were generally inscribed before baking, after which the letters became permanent. Gruter gives an inscription found outside the Porta Latina:

TEG · C · COSCONI ·
FIG · ASINI · POLL ·

* Monumenta Patavina.

† Ovid. Lib. Fastorum, ii. 535.
"Tegula projectis satis est velare coronis."

There is one epitaph of a catechumen in the Lapidarian Gallery:

VCILIANVS BACIO VALERIO
QVI BISIT · AN VIIII ·
VIII · DIES XXII CATECVM

Ucilianus, to Bacius Valerius, a Catechumen, who lived nine years, eight months, and twenty-two days.

The earliest recorded discussion, within the Church, upon the subject of infant baptism, is that which occurred in the year 253, as to whether the rite should be deferred till the eighth day of the infant's life, or administered at an earlier period if convenient. The question was unanimously decided against the restriction to the eighth day, that the spiritual rite might not seem to be hindered by the more carnal ordinance of the Jewish dispensation.*

Persons supposed to be in danger of death were baptized by a slight sprinkling while upon their beds: to these some discontented persons gave the name of Clinicks. Cyprian disavows all knowledge of any distinction between washing and sprinkling, and pretends that the authors of the appellation must have derived it from the writings of Hippocrates or some other physician : the only Clinick of whom he knew any thing was the bedridden subject of Christ's healing power. †

In an after age baptism was sometimes deferred on superstitious grounds, till severe illness; even in the hope of sinning with impunity till the per-

* Cyprian, Epist. 64. † Cyp. Epist. 69.

formance of the rite. This unworthy motive was scouted by the Church; and persons so baptized were reckoned in a certain degree infamous, being excluded from the clerical order.*

The ceremonies used in baptism, at first simple, were in course of time multiplied: the immersion was required to be threefold, or *trine*, as it was technically termed; and the renunciation of the devil and his works was thrice repeated.† The catechumen was supported in the water by a sponsor, who was obliged, by the decree of a council, to be of the same sex with the person baptized.

The celebrated medal of Constantine, given by most numismatists, is connected with too much uncertainty to allow of our attaching great importance to it. Whether the imperfect letters signify B.R.P.N., born for the good of the republic — a contraction given by Ainsworth as one in use, or BAP. N. — born in baptism — is doubtful: the learned are nearly equally divided on the point. ‡

In a church whose meetings were held below ground, artificial light was a necessary accompaniment to every service. Some persons have viewed in this custom the origin of tapers, employed in the daytime by Romanists; and have wished to con-

* Council of Neocæsarea, A.D. 314. Canon xii.

† A curious form of baptismal renunciation is found in the documents of the Concilium Liptinense, A.D. 743. "Forsachis tu diabolæ? Ec forsacho diabolæ. End allum diabol gelde? End allum diaboles wercum? Gelobistu in got almehtigan fadaer?" &c.

‡ Thesaurus Brandenburgieus, tom. iii. p. 178.

sider the continuance of candles in churches as a thank-offering for liberty to worship God in the upper air: a grateful recollection of former privations and concealment. But history seems to contradict so favourable a construction of the original motive of "candle religion," and to refer it undeniably to a different source.

The general habit of using lamps, mostly of terra cotta, is proved by the discovery of thousands in the Catacombs. The cubicula clara, or chapels open to the day, were rare; perhaps they did not exist till after the last persecution, when the fear of discovery no longer forbad an aperture from the campagna. But the employment of artificial light for the mere purpose of rendering objects visible, is quite distinct from the ceremonial use of it, whether to illuminate the shrine of a saint, or to "do vain honour to the Father of Lights." This ceremonial use, against which the Homily * energetically declaims, appears to have been generally connected with idolatry, excepting in the case of the Jewish ritual; and to have been unknown to Christians until after the time of Constantine.

The burning of lights is specified among the idolatrous rites forbidden by the Theodosian code: "Let no one, in any kind of place whatsoever, in any city, burn lights, offer incense, or hang up garlands, to senseless idols." Vigilantius, in reference to the custom of using lights in divine service, exclaims: "We almost see the ceremonial of the

* Against Peril of Idolatry, 3rd Part.

Gentiles introduced into the churches under pretence of religion: piles of candles lighted while the sun is still shining; and every where people kissing and worshipping I know not what; a little dust in a small vessel wrapped up in a precious cloth. Great honour do such persons render to the blessed martyrs, thinking with miserable tapers to illumine those whom the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, shines upon with the splendour of His majesty." This passage proves that Vigilantius, who must have known well the customs of Paganism, was struck with the resemblance between them and the rites newly introduced into the Church.*

The habit of placing lighted lamps before tombs was also begun by the Pagans. R. Rochette gives several instances; and quotes from Gruter this inscription:

HAVE · SEPTIMIA
SIT · TIBI · TERRA · LEVIS
QVISQVE · HVIC · TVMVLO
POSVIT · ARDENTE · LVCERNAM
ILLIVS · CINERES
AVREA · TERRA · TEGAT

Farewell Septimia: may the earth be light upon you. Whoever places a burning lamp before this tomb, let a golden soil cover his ashes. (Posuit is probably written for posuerit.)

Not only was the use of lights an element of Pagan worship, but it was universally reprobated

* Adversus Vigilantium, cap. 2. The original words, remarkable as embodying the first protest ever made against the

by the Church during the three first centuries. Tertullian instances the lighting of mid-day candles as a sign of folly: "Who would force a philosopher to lavish vain lights upon the noon-day?" * Besides being "wasteful and ridiculous excess," the custom was considered disreputable by association: "If a Christian woman marries a Pagan," he observes, "she must go in and out by a gate laurelled and lanterned, ut de novo consistorio libidinum publicarum." † He urges the same objection to the usual illumination in honour of the emperors: "Why do we not shadow our doors with laurels, or break in upon the day with lamps: is it desirable that our houses should bear a disgraceful appearance on a festival day?" However weak Tertullian's argument may have been, from choosing to misunderstand the common custom of illumination, it proves the non-existence of the usage in Christian worship: no Romanist

superstitions of Christendom, have been unintentionally immortalised by Jerome: "Prope ritum gentilium videmus sub prætextu religionis introductum in ecclesias, sole adhuc fulgente moles cereorum accendi, et ubicumque pulvisculum nescio quod, in modico vasculo pretioso linteamine circumdatum, osculantes adorare. Magnum honorem præbent hujusmodi homines beatissimis martyribus, quos putant de vilissimis cereolis illustrandos: quos Agnus, qui est in medio throni, cum omni fulgore majestatis suæ illustrat." Jerome has nothing to oppose but misrepresentation. "O mad head, who ever worshipped the martyrs? * * * Do you dare to say that they worship you don't know what? What do you mean by you don't know what? I should like to know. Tell us plainly, and blaspheme with more freedom."

* Apologeticus, cap. 46. † Ad Uxorem, lib. ii. cap. 6.

could possibly attach a bad meaning to candles by daylight. The same conclusion may be drawn from the words of Lactantius, who died in 325, the year of the Nicene Council. He says of the Pagans: "They slay rich and fat victims to God, as if He were hungry; pour libations of wine to Him, as if thirsty; and burn lights before Him, as if He lived in darkness."* "Do your gods," asks Arnobius, in allusion to the story of Ceres, "do your gods go about the world with lamps and torches in full sunshine?" † No Christian writer could have employed these expressions, if the ceremonial use of lights had been then established in the Church.

The fourth century witnessed an almost entire revolution in forms of worship. Prudentius, it is true, represents the candles as only employed at night: for, in the words put into the mouth of the Præfect (Hymn to St. Laurence), he calls upon the martyr to give up those golden candlesticks in which the tapers are placed for the nocturnal rites. ‡ But Paulinus of Nola, A.D. 396, glories in the splendour of his noonday illuminations: "The bright altars," he tells us, "are crowned with thickly-clustered lamps: the fragrant lights smell of the waxed papyri; day and night they burn; so that night glitters with the splendour of the day; and day itself, glorious with heavenly honours, shines the more, its lustre being doubled

* Institut. Divin. lib. vi. cap. 2.

† Contrà Gentes, lib. v. ‡ Peristeph. 3. 71.

by innumerable lamps." * The episcopal poet has somewhat exaggerated the effect of his lights, if we may judge by the smoky appearance of tapers in open day: though if his church was darkened, as in the ceremony of the illuminated Host of the Pauline Chapel, great brilliancy may have been produced.

Passages of this description are often met with in the poems of Paulinus; one of them is of considerable beauty:

* * * "tectoque supernè
Pendentes Lychni spiris retinentur ahenis,
Et medio in vacuo laxis vaga lumina nutant:
Funibus: undantes flammas levis aura fatigat." †

The statement of Jerome on this point is not very satisfactory. After declaring that none but ignorant and worldly persons ever used lights in the daylight service, the Church only employing them to dispel the darkness of the night, he confesses that throughout the East candles were lighted during the reading of the Gospel, in broad day, as a sign of joy. Jerome must also have known the practice of his friend Paulinus, from whom he had received a letter introducing Vigilantius to his acquaintance. ‡ The custom also existed in Spain,

* Natalis, iii. 100. † Ibid. ix. 389.

‡ The accuracy of Jerome is by no means such as to entitle his declaration to great weight. His well-known story of the nocturnal tribunal, before which he was chastised for his Ciceronian predilections, furnishes a proof of this. After narrating the circumstance to Eustochium in a most solemn manner, he

where it was condemned by the Council of Elvira, in the fourth century: "We decree," says the 34th Canon, "that no tapers be lighted in the cemeteries during the day; for the spirits of the saints must not be disturbed." Learned commentators have spent much time in endeavouring to show in what manner the souls of the dead are inconvenienced by the tapers; but the author is disposed to render *spiritus sanctorum* by "the minds of the holy who worship there," which might be disturbed thereby from serious prayer.

That the lights set up by the Pagans were considered part of the establishment of their idols, appears from an inscription preserved by Gruter, raised by Popilius and Popilia: it records the erection of

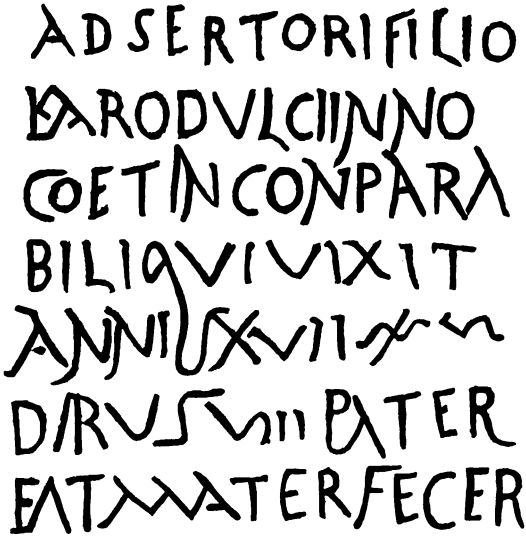
CVPIDINES II CVM SVIS LYCHNVCHIS
ET LVCERNA LARUM.

Two Cupids, with *their* candlesticks, and the lamp of the Lares.

The affection of surviving friends for the dead was recorded in the Catacombs in various ways. The epithets applied to children are generally ex-

continues: "That this was no mere sleep, no vain dream, such as often deludes us, let that dread tribunal before which I trembled be a witness; for it never before or since happened to me to undergo such an examination. I confess that my shoulders were livid with bruises, and I felt the strokes after my awaking." — Ad Eustochium, cap. 3. Yet when pressed with the story by Ruffinus, he complains, "With a new kind of impudence, he brings against me my dream." — Apologia contrà Ruffinum, lib. i. cap. 7.

pressive of innocence and sweetness of disposition. The first example here given is from the Lapidarian Gallery:



To Adsertor, our son, dear, sweet, most innocent, and incomparable, who lived seventeen years, six months, and eight days. His father and mother set up this.

Sometimes the length of life enjoyed by the deceased was expressed with unusual precision:

DEFVNTVS K SEPT
POMPEIANO INNO
CENTIOVIVIXII
ANN VI MESES · VIIII
DIES VIII ORAS IIII
DORMIT IN PACE

In Christ — Died on the Kalends of September, Pompeianus the innocent, aged six years, nine months, eight days, and four hours. He sleeps in peace.

Other expressions of esteem were employed:

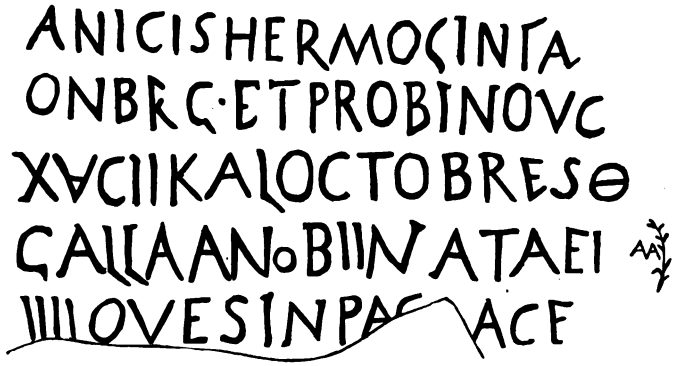
SPIRITO SANCTO
INNOCENTI QVI
VIXIT AN · PL · M · III

To the holy soul Innocens, who lived three years, more or less (plus minus).

DOMITIANVS ANIMA SINPLEX
DORMIT IN PACE

Domitianus, a simple soul, sleeps in peace.

Another, from the Lapidarian Gallery, somewhat difficult to read, relates the number of elder children belonging to the family:



Read—Anicio Hermogiano Olibrione, et Probino V.C. xvii. Kal. Octobris, Θανουσα Galla Anobii, nata ei quarta, quiescit in pace.

Translate—In the Consulate of Anicius Hermogianus Olibrio, and of Probinus, on the 17th Kalends of October, died Galla, daughter of Anobius, born to him fourth. She sleeps in peace.

The consuls fix the date to be 395. Θ is read Θανουσα, on the authority of Ainsworth.

Several interesting inscriptions refer to conjugal attachment:

CLAVDIO BENEMERENTI
STVDIOSO QVI AMABIT ME · VIX
AN · P · M · XXV IN P ·

To Claudius the well-deserving and affectionate, who loved me. He lived twenty-five years, more or less. In peace.

The next is an imitation of a usual Pagan form:

CECILIVS · MARITVS CECILIAE PLACIDINAE
COIVGI OPTIME MEMORIAE CVM QVA
VIXI ANNIS X · BENE SE · NE VLLA
QVERELLA IXΘYC

Cecilius the husband, to Cecilia Placidina my wife, of excellent memory, with whom I lived well ten years, without any quarrel. In Christ. (Lap. Gall.)

The next is from the same collection:

DOMNINAE
NNOCENTISSINAE · ET DVLCISSIMAE COIVGI
QVAE VIXIT ANN XVI · M IIII · ET FVIT ·
IMARITATA · ANN DVOBVS · M·IIII · D · VIIII ·
CVM QVA NON LICVIT FVISSE · PROPTER
CAVSAS PEREGRINATIONIS
NISI · MENSIBVS · VI
OVO · TEMPORE · VTEGOSENSI EI EXHBVI
AMOREM MEVM
NVLLIS VALII · SIC DILEXERVNT
DEPOSIT · XV KAL · IVN

To Domnina,
My sweetest and most innocent wife, who lived sixteen years and four months, and was married two years, four months, and nine days: with whom I was not able to live, on account of my travels, more than six months. During which time I shewed her my love (such) as I felt it. None else so loved each other. Buried on the 15th Kalends of June.

The custom of adding an ejaculatory prayer was derived from the Pagans: the instance here given is copied from a heathen columbarium on the Esquiline Hill:

HIC RELICIAE PELOPIS
SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS

Here lie the remains of Pelops. May the earth be light upon thee.

The Christians continued the habit, as in —

VIVAS VINCAS
May you live: may you conquer.

FAVSTINA DVLCIS . BIBAS
IN DEO
Sweet Faustina, may you live in God.

ZωTIKE
ZHCAICEN
KYPIωΘAPPI
Zoticus, may you live. Trust in the Lord.

BOLOSA DEVS TI
BIREFRIGERET QVAE VI
XIT ANNOS XXXI RECESSIT
DIE XIII KAL OCT . B
Bolosa, may God refresh thee. She lived thirty-one years. She departed on the thirteenth Kalends of October.

The expression, "may God refresh thee," is also contained in another epitaph, found, together with the two last, in the Lapidarian Gallery:

'AMERIMNVS
RVFINAE · COIV
GICARIS · SIME
BENEMEREN
TI · SPIRITVM ·
TVVM · DEVS
REFRI · GERET
Amerimnus to Rufina, my dearest wife, the well-deserving. May God refresh thy spirit.

They are both explained by a third:

NICEFORVS ANIMA
DVLCIS IN REFRIGERIO
Nicephorus, a sweet soul, in the place of refreshment.

These epitaphs prove the doctrine of the primitive Church regarding the departed souls of be-

lievers: they are not said to be in heaven, nor in purgatory, but in a state of refreshing by means of God's presence — in God —

ARETVSA
IN DEO.
(Lap. Gall.)

The expression "borne away by angels" applied by our Lord to blessed Lazarus, can scarcely be supposed to imply a conveyance to expiatory flames:

SEVERO FILIO DVL
CISSIMO LAVRENTIVS
PATER BENEMERENTI QVI BI
XIT ANN · IIII · ME · VIII · DIES · V
ACCERSITVS AB ANGELIS VII · IDVS IANVA

Laurence to his sweetest son Severus, borne away by angels on the seventh Ides of January, &c.

MACVS PVER INNOCENS
ESSE IAMINTER INNOCNTIS COEPISTI
QVAM STAVILES TIVI HAEC VITA EST
QVAM TELETVM EXCIPET MATER ECLESIAE DEOC
MVNDO REVERTENTEM COMPREMATVR PEC-
TORVM
GEMITVS STRVATVR FLETVS OCVLORVM

Macus (or Marcus), an innocent boy. You have already begun to be among the innocent ones. How enduring is such a life to you! How gladly will your mother, the Church of God, receive you, returning to this world. Let us restrain our sighs, and cease from weeping. (Lapidarian Gallery.)

From these epitaphs, as well as from others scattered throughout this work, it is evident that the modern Romish notions on this subject were entirely unknown to the ancient Christians. The absurdity of construing such ejaculatory prayers

as we have just seen, into a support for the doctrine of Purgatory, is the more evident, when it is known that the early Church were in the habit of offering commemorative prayers for all the dead, — Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, and even for the Virgin Mary, whom no one will affirm to have been submitted to the purifying flames. A prayer to this effect is quoted from the so-called Liturgy of St. Chrysostom, by Basnage. *

Sometimes, instead of the ejaculatory prayer, we find some consolatory sentiment, as

DAMALIS HIC SIC · V · D
Here lies Damalis, so God wills. (Boldetti.)

Or one of a more Pagan character:

ΕΥΨΥΧΙ CEKOYNΔOY
ΔΙCAΘΑΝΑΤOS ΡΗΓΙΤΑΝΑ
Be of good cheer, Secunda, no one is immortal.

Mabillon † has given a sarcophagus with the words:

Θυδεις αθαναος, θαρσει Ευγενεια,
Be confident, Eugenia, no one is immortal.

The manner of expressing death was also varied, as in these instances:

IN PACE ET BENEDICTIONE SVFSVATI
VIXIT-ANNIS XXX · PLVS NINVS RED
DIDIT · XI · KAL · FEB ·

In Peace and Blessing. Suesatis lived thirty years, more or less. He paid [the debt of nature] the eleventh Kalends of February.

* Hist. de l'Eglise. liv. 19. chap. 10.

† The learned Benedictine has read this epitaph, "None is immortal by boldness or nobility." The inscription to Secunda was first translated by Raoul Rochette.

AGATE FILIA DVLCISSIMA QVE
VIXIT ANN PM · VIIII ET D · LXIII
F · ATVM FECIT PRID . IDVS MART

Agate, our sweetest daughter * * * fulfilled her destiny, &c. (Lap. Gall.)

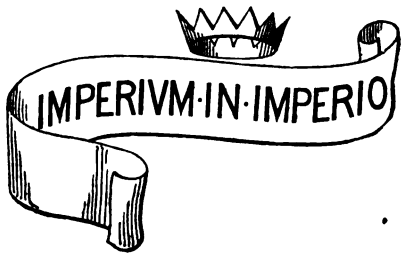
The usual Greek form is seen in the next: (Lap. Gall.)

ΙΟΥΛΙΑ
ΜΑΡΚΙΑ
ΕΝΘΑΔΕ
ΚΕΙΤΑΙ

Julia Marcia lies here.

The principal events which affected the Church of the third and fourth centuries are, as might be expected, scarcely noticed in the Christian cemeteries. If the persecutions have been left unmentioned by the survivors of martyrs, so also has the most striking incident of secular history, the sudden and universal establishment of Christianity over the Roman world. No record of this circumstance can be found in the catacombs, where the Church appears as little elated by triumph, as before depressed by adversity. The increased number of epitaphs after the conversion of Constantine, indicates a sudden spread of Christianity in the metropolis, although the worship of the gods lingered in the *pagi* or smaller villages: hence is generally derived the term Paganism. Every means short of actual persecution was adopted to erase the ancient superstition; and as the character of the augurs had sunk extremely low, they were summarily abolished by law. Divination

was made a capital crime, and the use of lights, frankincense, and garlands in worship was forbidden. The civil privileges of Heathen priests were abolished, and corresponding immunities conferred upon the regular clergy. But the religion of the Cross, in its first plenitude of worldly power, did not forget its heavenly character: the manumission of slaves, as an act of mercy, was the only business permitted on Sundays; and the crime of cursing the Emperor was treated with magnanimous indifference: "If the curse be uttered in levity," decreed Theodosius, "it is to be despised; if in madness, to be pitied; if in malice, to be forgiven."



CHAPTER VII.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN ART.

THE fine arts had not long arrived at maturity in Rome, when they were encountered by a power before which they were destined to be humbled to the dust. Apart from their connection with idolatry, they were themselves an object of adoration to the civilised world: sculpture had long led captive the imagination of men: and those works which even now tempt the Christian to "bow down and worship" the genius, if not the productions, of their authors, were almost universally appreciated. The severely regular drama, the most lofty style of sculpture, whose restoration to the world is the day-dream of the enthusiastic lover of art, were then living elements of society: the villa of Adrian still displays the small theatre where Greek tragedies were intoned before the Emperor and his household: and the Antinöus of the same date attests the perfection to which sculpture had attained in the Roman metropolis. Before many years, the empire of imagination passed away: and the genius of art, with "torch extinct, and swimming eyes," had to mourn over the introduction of the hieratic style, which, wherever it has appeared throughout the world, has cramped and almost annihilated the inventive faculty. Throughout the

works of Egypt, Hindostan, and the Byzantine school, restrictions, similar to those which appear in the remains of the Catacombs, confined the artist to an unvaried round of repetition, beyond which it was forbidden to pass. The greatest efforts of individual genius have only displayed most glaringly the defects of the system: the intaglios of Karnac, almost the best hieratic work in existence, exhibit, perhaps the most forcibly, the hopeless struggle. In those gigantic outlines, devoid of perspective, anatomy, and truth, some persons have thought to trace the original of the Parthenaic friezes. And notwithstanding these capital defects, so vigorous is their conception, so terrible is the writhing of the captives whose entangled hair fills the grasp of their conqueror, that it is difficult to refuse to the performance a high place among works of art. With such scenes an Egyptian monarch might at pleasure decorate his palace: but the choice of subject, scale, and arrangement alone belonged to him: the imitation of nature lay altogether beyond the legitimate province of art. While we find in the better class of obelisks, execution absolutely perfect, and an admirable exactness in copyism, in vain do we seek, from the time of Moses to that of Ptolemy, the least approximation to natural forms. The Lateran obelisk, brought from the city of the Pharaohs, and supposed to have stood where Moses, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, must have daily passed beneath it, is in no way behind the Ptolemaic Denderah,

notwithstanding all that art had meanwhile achieved in more favoured Greece. The lotus-leaf never alters, nor do the owl and ibis seem to borrow a single characteristic from the models which nature has abundantly furnished in the country of the Nile.

Not the least remarkable result of these restrictions was the state of degradation to which they reduced the artist. Of any individual poet, sculptor, or painter in Egypt, we do not possess the slightest record: yet genius was undoubtedly known among them. In Greece, on the contrary, the sculptor, embodying in majestic proportions the gods of his idolatry, made them what they were in public estimation; conferred immortality upon them, and shared in the honours of his own creation. It is to the cloud-compelling divinity of the Iliad, and the Thunderer of the Capitoline museum, that we are indebted for our nobler conceptions of the son of Saturn: in them we almost learn to forget the disgraceful exploits of the profligate Jupiter. The sculptor of Egypt was but the slave of the priesthood.

We are thus enabled to divide the productions of art into two great classes: the hieratic, including the Egyptian, Byzantine, Hindostan, Mexican, and early Christian; and the free, executed by artists not compelled to conform to the directions of a religious government. Of these, the Etruscan, Greek, Roman, and later Christian, stand pre-eminent: although Etruria seems to have owned two schools, — the

one producing stiff and unnatural designs; and the other, of which little now remains, rivalling Greece itself in beauty of conception. The two styles differ still more widely in intention: the one appeals to the reason, conveying generally some symbolic meaning; while the other, requiring no interpreter, exerts a more powerful influence, from addressing chiefly the passions and imagination.

The conventional types of Christian art being once fixed, the sole province of the workman was to repeat them without variation. The Greek church, according to Hope, adopted a measure still more severe upon the artist: the priests, as if fearing lest, by too close a resemblance to the original, the worship should be transferred to the copy, fixed upon such stiff and inanimate forms as were not likely to produce more than the slight measure of devotional feeling allowed to the worshipper. But the background was made to compensate for the dryness of the figure: and the countenance, eclipsed by jewellery and gilding, was overwhelmed by the accessories intended to adorn it.*

The stamp impressed upon Christian art in the beginning of its career, was destined to remain no longer than the barbarism of the world should render necessary. After lying torpid during twelve hundred years, the dreary winter of Europe's history, Art awoke with the spring of the *renaissance* mature in age, though marked with the characteristics of extreme youth. Like the newly eman-

* Hope's Essays on Architecture.

cipated insect, it appeared at once in its fullest splendour, a sad presage of its brief existence: and the days of the Transfiguration, the Moses, and the Sistine Judgment, have passed away,—never, to all appearance, to be restored.

The application of the arts to Christian purposes was not, as we have seen, permitted without scruple. They had long been devoted to the cause of Polytheism; they were its daughters: and even when apparently converted to the service of Christianity, they remained but too faithful to their parent. For the little that they contributed to their new mistress, crippled and fettered as they were, they had their revenge in this, that they turned the hearts of men back to the days of their former triumphs. The buildings, the statues, the drama, and the circus, all perpetuated the Paganism of older times, and forced the leaders of the Church to adapt their precepts, as much as possible, to the universal bias of the popular mind. So the many wives of Solomon, each the daughter of a king*, added nothing to the glory of the Jewish monarch, while they turned his heart from the worship of Jehovah. The treachery of Pagan art was never more apparent than when the Pantheon of Rome, originally devoted to Jupiter and all the gods, was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and all the Saints: the building seemed to be Christianised, but in truth it was Christianity that was Paganised.

* 1 Kings, xi. 3.

Provided men are worshipped there, it matters little by what names they are invoked.

The monopoly of taste by the heathen at first prevented any successful attempt at originality on the part of their opponents, to whom it only remained to follow the correct models of Polytheism, or to strike out an inferior path for themselves. The version of the 1st Psalm, by Paulinus, beginning

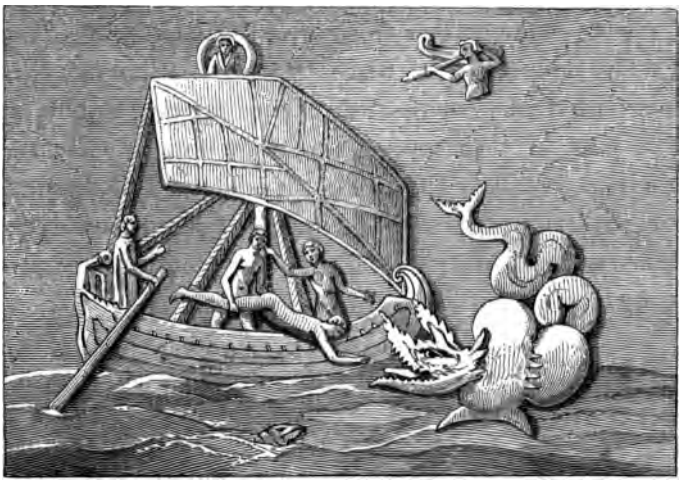
> " Beatus ille qui procul vitam suam
> Ab impiorum segregavit coetibus,"

evidently imitates the ode

> " Beatus ille qui procul negotiis,"

of Horace: and the best description of a martyr's fortitude by Prudentius, falls short of the passage which it seems to copy, describing the just man unmoved amid the dissolution of a shattered world, whose fragments light upon his fearless head.

It has been well remarked by Raoul Rochette, that, of all the elements of Paganism received as lawful by the professors of Christianity, sculpture, which had struck its roots most deeply in the old soil, was the least capable of being transplanted into the new. This fact cannot be better exemplified than by the bas-reliefs of the history of Jonah, where much is borrowed from heathen myths. In the specimen here copied from a sarcophagus now deposited in the Vatican library, the storm is personified by a Triton blowing through a convoluted shell: and Iris, with floating scarf, hovering over



the sail, indicates the tranquillity that followed the ejection of the prophet. The fish is copied from sculptures representing Andromeda exposed to a sea monster; a story which appears to have been invented long after the history of Jonah, and to have been founded upon it. The earliest writer alluding to it, is Apollodorus, who flourished about 115 years before Christ, and 750 after Jonah.* The scene of both narrations lies at Joppa, designated by Jerome as "the port of the fugitive Jonah, and, if I may add something from the fables of the poets, witness of Andromeda bound to a rock." It is remarkable that strong evidence of the existence of a sea-monster long remained at Joppa. Pomponius Mela tells us that "they still

* Bibliotheca, lib. ii. cap. 4. He mentions Andromeda, but not Joppa.

exhibit some huge bones of a marine animal, the plain traces of Andromeda's preservation by Perseus." * Pliny describes Joppa as "placed upon a hill, with a projecting rock, on which they still show the marks of Andromeda's chains." Elsewhere he describes the bones of the monster which Scaurus brought to Rome from Joppa: the skeleton measured forty feet in length, having a spine one foot and a half thick, and ribs larger than those of an elephant. There is also a tradition which describes Jason as escaping, armed and unhurt, from the mouth of a sea-monster. Such testimonies seem to imply a better foundation for the story than the fables of writers like Apollodorus.

By the ancient Church, the history of Jonah was viewed as a type of our Saviour's death and resurrection, and was the most popular object of representation employed in the Catacombs. In subterranean chapels, where the living were separated from the dead by a mere tile or slab of stone, and sometimes liable to be mingled with them by the violence of their enemies, even before the conclusion of their worship, the hope of a future life naturally occupied a prominent place in their creed. The words, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead," must have resounded with solemn import through those dreary caves; and all that could help a trembling faith to seize the joyful reality was eagerly adopted. Jonah, escaping from the

* De Situ Orbis. lib. i. cap. 11.

whale, or reclining beneath the gourd, may be every where seen, at first scratched upon the walls, and afterwards sculptured on sarcophagi. In the emblem of a risen saint, the sins and sorrows of the original hero were forgotten, and the gourd, copied from a species still sold in the Roman market, represented less the ephemeral protection of the complaining prophet, than the cool foliage of Paradise. At times, the latter part of the history is still more condensed: the ship, the whale, and the gourd, signifying earth, hades, and heaven, are brought into one point of view:

the subject of the awful adventure, but just ejected from the ship, and scarcely extricated from the jaws of the monster, is already overshadowed by the ripened fruit. In this small fragment of marble, the Christian of ancient times might trace his own career: his passage from the unstable element too well expressing his present life, through the gate of death, not inaptly represented by the terrible monster, suffered to engorge, though not to retain, its prey; to a land beyond those swelling floods, where the head of the tempest-tossed wanderer rests on the root of that plant whose fruit protects him from the angry sun.

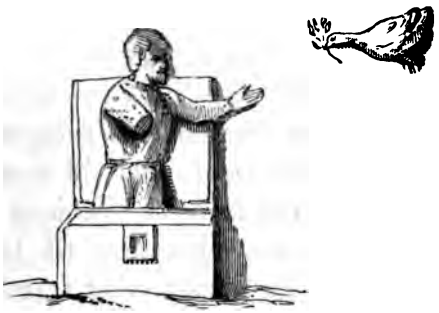
The nature of the plant which covered Jonah's booth has been made a matter of discussion: it is evident from many works that the ancient Christians considered it to be a gourd, as rendered in our version of the Bible.

The history of Noah early took a powerful hold of Christian minds, either from its resemblance to the myth of Deucalion, with which they were already familiar, or from the application to the baptismal rite made by St. Peter. The early sculptures and paintings of Noah were borrowed from Paganism, which thus repaid a debt it owed to Divine truth, from which it had copied almost entire the history of Deucalion. It is surprising to find Plutarch citing as a common opinion, "that the dove sent out from the ark brought to Deucalion a certain index of stormy weather by its return, and of tranquillity by its flying away." *

On examining any of the numerous sculptures representing Noah in the ark, we are immediately struck by the extreme discrepancy between the

* De Solertiâ Animalium. The substitution of *Deucalion* for *Noah*, in this passage, is so natural, that it might escape the notice of a hasty reader.

work of art, and the biblical narrative which it professes to illustrate; nor is it a sufficient answer to our surprise, to be informed that this is owing to the scarcity of the Old Testament writings; since the traditional knowledge of the preservation of Noah's family was too general to allow of such a degree of ignorance. If we look for explanation to other paintings or sarcophagi, we find nothing to help out the story; the same want of correct



information is every where observable: the ark is a mere box, provided with lid and lock; the family of the Patriarch reduced to a single figure, and the animals are altogether omitted. If we explore the

entire school of art of the fourth century, we shall find but little variation in the treatment of the

subject: the execution progresses from bad to worse, but the absurdities are stereotyped. The artist, in a desperate attempt to evade the charge of direct copyism, resolves upon a change of position:

the Patriarch turns from side to side, or receives the dove in a new attitude. This idea of Noah is evidently not derived from the book of Genesis; and yet the mutual resemblance of the sculptures, as well as the absence of any other type, indicates plainly some common original.

Early in the last century, the attention of antiquarians was roused by the discovery of certain medals displaying two figures floating in a small box, accompanied by two doves, one of which bears an olive branch. The inscriptions showed them to have been struck in Apamea, during the reign of Septimius Severus, probably on the occasion of an inundation of that province. The explanation of these medals was long hindered by the repeated forgery of duplicates, which differed from the originals only in the letters inscribed on the box. Falconieri, who published a learned dissertation on the subject, read them NΩE, the Greek name of

Noah. Others made them out NHTΩN; some could find no characters at all; and a fourth party deciphered the abbreviation NEΩK. The wood-cut annexed is taken from Falconieri's plate, omitting

the rest of the subject, which represents the same figures praying on dry land. The third letter has also been omitted, as an acknowledged forgery.*

If the letters themselves have been variously read, their meaning has furnished no less room for conjecture. The name of Noah; the dual of εγω, in allusion to a line of Ovid; the termination of απαμεων written backwards; have all had their advocates. But time, by exposing the forgeries, and bringing to light fresh specimens of the authentic coinage, has revealed the true meaning of the contested inscription. The figures in the box turn out to be those of Deucalion and Pyrrha: the box itself is not the ark of Noah, but a chest or κιβωτος, selected by the mint-master, from the correspondence between its name and that of the district

* Gronovii Thesaurus, tom. x. Another engraving is to be found in Sestini's work on coins, plate x. It is even more rude than the sketch given above.

(in Greek): and the letters are NEΩK, a contraction of νεωκορων, signifying *curatores* of the sacred rites and temples. The Neocori appear on many medals of the time; and their functions have been copiously illustrated by antiquarians of the last century.*

There can be no reasonable doubt that this representation of Deucalion, drawn in a peculiar manner to gratify the vanity of the Apameans, is the real model from which all the bas-reliefs of Noah have been imitated. The readiness with which the Pagan version of the story was adopted by the Christians, and the servile copyism by which the type thus obtained was perpetuated, exemplify in a striking manner the condition of nascent Christian art.

The first sculptor who attempted the subject deviated widely from the inspired history; reduced the family of the patriarch to a single person, and the ark containing beasts and birds innumerable, to a box; yet, rather than hazard an original idea, his successor must repeat, and hand down unchanged, the type so strangely consecrated.

The philosopher Celsus condescends to notice the Christians' account of the deluge, "with the ridiculous ark that held every thing inside it" †, as

* There are on this subject three essays in the Archæologia, vol. 4. Also an excellent notice by Raoul Rochette, Mémoires de l'Academie de Belles Lettres, t. xiii.

† Origen in Celsum, lib. iv.

a piece of his mythology amplified by them. It speaks strongly for the power of education over the mind, that Celsus, brought up to believe the enormous follies of heathenism, should be stumbled by the rational and just interposition of Almighty power in the case of righteous Noah.

The preservation of God's people through difficulties, more especially if effected by a miracle, generally formed the subject of those sculptures which were not executed for the sake of their allegorical meaning. The perils of Daniel and the three youths, from their resemblance to the circumstances in which the Roman Christians were placed, enjoyed a preference. The genius of their religion was conspicuously displayed in this choice of subjects. Surrounded by real dangers and persecutions, they did not seek to celebrate their own sufferings, still less to immortalise individual heroism : but passing by the ungulæ and stakes with which they were most conversant in daily life, they drew their humble measure of inspiration from the bloodless confessions of Shadrach and Daniel. A people revelling in luxurious ease may find gratification in applying the resources of art to the illustration of martyr-suffering. A Parmegiano, himself safe from the rack and the flames, had leisure to elaborate the well-proportioned figure of his heroine, to embody in a dark and rugged executioner all that could contrast with the fair and undraped form of the victim, and to array in the terrors of chiaroscuro the

instruments of torture and death: till the world, worked up to frenzy by the sight, fancied itself ready to die in the cause, and by acclamation voted itself Christian. But the ancient Church never represented scenes of a painful character: the deliverance of a Jew from the lions of Babylon was preferred to the destruction of a Christian by those of the Colosseum; and the three Hebrews preserved from the rage of Nebuchadnezzar were a more consolatory subject than the victims of Neronian cruelty, wrapped in pitch cloth, and used as torches to illuminate the circus.

In this fragment of a sarcophagus, the usual licence of early art is perceived: the mighty furnace of the plains of Dura is reduced to a mere oven in three compartments: and the fourth figure, "like unto the Son of God," is omitted.

The figures of Daniel appear in every degree of rudeness; although the subject, requiring, as it was thought, a knowledge of the nude, presented difficulties equal to that of Adam and Eve. The specimen annexed is from a Catacomb painting.

The Good Shepherd, a character appropriated by our Saviour, was an emblem not unknown to Paganism. The sylvan deity Pan was anciently represented by sculptors with a goat thrown across his shoulders, and a Pan's pipe, or syrinx, in his hand. According to Pausanias, the people of Tanagra worshipped Mercury under the name of Criophorus, or the Ram-bearer; and Calamis executed a statue of Mercury with the ram borne on his shoulders. The yearly feast in his honour was kept by one of the youths bearing a lamb round the walls of the city.* The Roman poets also make allusion to the custom of carrying a stray or neglected lamb on the shoulders of the shepherd. Calpurnius thus addresses a friend employed in

* Pausanias, lib. ix.

farming: "Think it not beneath you, when visiting the sheepfolds at night, to bear on your shoulders the exhausted sheep, and to carry in your bosom the trembling young." * Tibullus also: "Be not too indolent to carry home in your bosom the lamb or kid deserted by its forgetful mother." † Almost the same expressions are applied by Isaiah to God's care of his people. Our Lord therefore only adapted to his purpose a figure well known both to Jews and Greeks, and ennobled it for ever by application to Himself.

The Good Shepherd was a type much valued by the early Church, and the character in which they most delighted to represent our Lord. It was in this form that the exalted imagination of Perpetua figured Him to herself: in her dream she ascended the ladder that reached to heaven, and saw there a man with white hair, in the dress of a shepherd, milking his sheep. Tertullian also refers to the Good Shepherd painted on the sacramental cups: "Pastor quem in calice depingis." ‡

In the tomb of the Nasones, a heathen family of eminence in Rome, may be seen, among many mythological paintings, the figure of a shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders, and a crook in his hand, surrounded by the Four Seasons.§ What was intended by this heathen painting is not clear; but, by a slight alteration, the same composition was

* Calpurn. Eclog. v. 39. † Eleg. ii. 11—12.

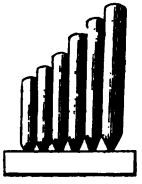
‡ De Pudicitiâ, cap. 10.

§ Bellori, Tomb of the Nasones, plate xxii.

soon converted into a "Bonus Pastor" by Christian artists. The change, however, was slow: the Pan's pipe remained for some time in the hand of the Chief Shepherd, and the Roman dress was seldom abandoned.

This painting, found in a catacomb chapel, seems to be an imitation of the Naso picture, or perhaps of the statue by Calamis.

The Pan's pipe subjoined, is also found in the hand of a "Good Shepherd," in the Catacombs.



The subject is more thoroughly Christianised in the next specimen, taken from a sarcophagus.

The shepherd, more advanced in years, with the eyes turned towards heaven, is provided with the belt and scrip proper to his calling.

The miracles wrought by our Saviour were always a standard subject for sculpture: a suite of them was generally placed on one side of every large sarcophagus. Among them may be particularised the resurrection of Lazarus, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the restoration of sight to the blind, and the cure of the paralytic. In the resurrection of Lazarus, here copied from a marble sarcophagus deposited in the Vatican library, the usual arrangement is observed.

The temple-shaped tomb is hung with garlands, in the manner of a Roman sepulchre, and altogether unlike the gospel description of a cave and stone. The mummy of Lazarus, and the reduced figure of his sister Mary, are repeated in innumerable forms, many of which would be unintelligible without the aid of comparison.

In all the pictures and sculptures of our Lord's history, no reference is ever found to his sufferings or death: an apparent exception is met with in the bas-relief representing Pilate washing his hands; but a moment's reflection will explain the sculptor's

motive for choosing that subject. The Christians, never forgetting the crime of treason originally imputed to them, were anxious to clear themselves of the charge; and employed their best eloquence to prove that, by daily praying for their Emperor, they were rendering him greater service than the heathen possibly could. Every acquittal of a Christian by his judge was triumphantly adduced in their own justification: even the slight favour shown by Trajan was magnified into a licence. The mutilated bas-relief here copied, derived its value from the declaration of Pilate, "I find no fault in this man," rather than from any reference to our Lord's sufferings.

In this feeble composition, occupying a compartment on the side of a sarcophagus, there are still some reminiscences of the antique: the head of Pilate's

wife, seen in profile, is better sketched than usual: and the method of washing, implied by the empty bowl, is characteristic. In the East, the water is still poured from the vase over the hands, and caught by the bowl, so that it should not pass over them twice.

The ancient Christians, though continually in the habit of representing our Saviour, never designed the First Person of the Trinity in human form. A single piece of sculpture has been found in the Catacombs, supposed to throw doubt upon the truth of this assertion: it exhibits Cain and Abel bringing their gifts to an aged man seated in a chair; this figure has been interpreted by Romanists as that of the Almighty Father. But on this subject the opinion of Raoul Rochette, himself a Romanist, is opposed to them. "I doubt," he says, "the reality of this explanation, contrary to all we know of Christian monuments of the first ages, where the intervention of the Eternal Father is only indicated in the abridged and symbolic manner proper to antiquity, by the image of a hand. In this parcular instance," he continues, "I should prefer viewing in this figure of an old man seated, Adam receiving the gifts of his sons, to offer them to God."

There are among the Catacomb sculptures, two well-marked instances of this indication of the Deity by a hand: Abraham offering up Isaac, and Moses receiving the law.

In this often-repeated subject, the Christian might behold the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God, and the interposition of Divine power on his own behalf. An accurate rendering of Bible history is not to be expected in these ancient works: it is often difficult to suppose that their authors had access to the inspired Word.

The hand is sometimes encircled by clouds, as if to signify more strongly its symbolic character. This figure of Moses receiving the law, as well as that of Abraham, occur on sarcophagi in the Vatican library.

The prohibitions of the Fathers against visible representations of God may be seen in Bingham's Antiquities of the Church : even Paulinus, who greatly promoted the employment of sacred art in churches, stopped short of this impiety. He speaks of the three Persons of the Trinity as being represented by a Lamb, a Dove, and a Voice from Heaven. According to Milman, the French have claimed the "happy boldness" of first introducing the Father in human form. This assertion is made upon the strength of an illuminated Bible, attributed to the ninth century.

It has been already stated that no gloomy subjects occur in the cycle of early Christian art: some very slight and doubtful exceptions have been found. The dismal pictures of Sebastian, St. Peter, and St. Paul, copied by Bosio and Aringhi, evidently belong to much later times, as proved by the ecclesiastical dresses of the figures, and the modern character of the tapers introduced. A martyrdom of St. Salome, the only work of the kind known to D'Agincourt, was referred by him to the tenth century; and that of Felicitas, more lately discovered, is brought down by R. Rochette at least as late as the seventh. About the close of the fourth century, Prudentius described pictures of the martyrdoms of Cassianus and Hippolytus as then existing. We

must not therefore altogether refuse a place to the new school of martyr-painting, the *drame horrible* of the time, among the works of the fourth century. The death of Hippolytus, if at all resembling the poet's rapturous description, must have been a disgusting performance: he particularly dwells upon the dexterous imitation of the blood trickling over and staining the rocks and sand.

In looking onward from the origin of Christian sculpture, we can trace no subsequent rise of the art, as in the case of painting and architecture. Like a tree planted in uncongenial soil, it became permanently stunted and dwarfish: and the remarkable branches afterwards put forth by it, were not properly of its own growth, but grafts upon the more fertile stock of sacred painting. Thus the knowledge of anatomy and design necessary to the production of Michael Angelo's Moses, was not accumulated by a succession of sculptors, but gradually developed in the Roman and Florentine schools of painting. The converse held good in the Pagan world: on examining such a work as the fresco called the Aldobrandini marriage, we find the colouring and effect altogether subordinate to the drawing of the figures: and all the best ancient pictures display rather a sculptor's idea of painting, than the work of a separate school of that branch of art.

Sacred painting, in professing to preserve the portraits of the first founders of Christianity, proffers a strong claim upon our attention. The representations of the Saviour, which became very

numerous in the fourth century, agree so remarkably with each other, that it has been supposed by many that some authentic protrait must have been preserved. To support this idea, numberless fables have been invented: some writers having made St. Luke a painter, that he might be believed to have painted our Lord and His Mother: and by similar authority, Nicodemus has become a sculptor. In the sixth century, Nicephorus discovered that the Virgin Mary had long hazel eyes, hands and feet somewhat taper, and a nose slightly beyond the common size; that she was of moderate stature, although there had been persons who called her tall: that she never smiled when addressing men, and never betrayed in her countenance the emotions of shame or anger. He professes to quote from Epiphanius, who lived one hundred and fifty years earlier, and who wrote a treatise against the Antidicomarians. The author has expended some time in a fruitless search for this passage in Epiphanius; and Cardinal Baronius has had no better success, as he is forced to quote the opinion of Epiphanius from the writings of Nicephorus.*

The most celebrated pretended portrait of our Lord, is that said to have been kept at Edessa: its history is not difficult to trace. It is related by Eusebius, Nicephorus, Procopius, and others, that Abgarus, king of Edessa, having heard of our Saviour's miracles, conceived an earnest desire to see Him, and sent a messenger named Ananias, re-

* Nicephori Hist. Eccles. ii. cap. 23.

questing Him to take up His abode at Edessa, as a convenient shelter from the malignity of the Jews. The kindness of Abgarus was acknowledged by the divine Wanderer, who wrote a letter, (first mentioned by Eusebius in the fourth century,) in which He praised the faith of Abgarus, and explained the nature of His mission, which forbad the proposed visit. Thus far Eusebius: but the later historians add, that Christ sent with the letter His own portrait, miraculously executed, in compassion to the infirmity of the painter despatched by Abgarus, who was too much dazzled by the outward splendour of the Man of Sorrows to be able to portray His countenance. In consequence of this letter, Edessa was considered impregnable: a promise to this effect, though not exactly contained in the letter, being supplied, say the historians, by the faith of the Edessenes. About the year 450, Chosröe, king of Persia, having heard of the boasted impregnability of the city, determined to put it to the proof. He therefore besieged it with a powerful army, threw up an enormous scaffolding of timber, and prepared to march his troops directly over the walls. The dispirited Edessenes now bethought themselves of the portrait of our Lord, and by the use of it imparted such miraculous qualities to the water of their aqueduct, that when sprinkled upon the hostile structure, it insured its speedy combustion.

Evagrius, in relating this story, professes to quote, though with some amplification, from Procopius,

who does not mention the siege, and tells us that Chosröe never reached Edessa. His account of the matter is as follows:

On the road which Chosröe took, was situated a small village named Batne, distant one day's journey from Edessa. Arriving there at night, he took up his quarters, and resumed his route the next morning: but after the day's march, was surprised to find himself exactly where he had spent the previous night. This fruitless travel, according to Procopius, was repeated the next day, and with no better result. A treaty was then set on foot between the Edessenes and their enemy, which ended by their paying two hundred pounds of gold to induce him to retire. Not that they had any fear, explains the historian, for the security of their city, firmly believing in the promise; but merely lest the Persians should injure the surrounding country.*

All these fables are at once overturned by the testimony of Augustine, who expressly declares that no authentic portraits of the Holy Family, or of the Apostles, were in existence. "Who," he asks, "on reading or hearing what the Apostle Paul has written, or what has been told concerning him, does not picture to himself the face of the Apostle, and of those whose names are there mentioned. Yet among so many who read, each conceives dif-

* De Bello Persico, lib. ii. The last we hear of this portrait is at the second council of Nice, A.D. 787. A lector named Leo there declared that he had seen it worshipped by the Edessenes. Labbæus. Concilia. t. vii.

ferently of their form and features, and it is quite uncertain whose idea is most like the truth. * * * For even the fleshly countenance of our Lord is varied by the diversity of innumerable opinions, and so painted: which nevertheless was but one, whatever that may have been. * * * Nor we do know the face of the Virgin Mary. Let us beware lest our faith lie in matters of fiction; (fides ne ficta) if we believe regarding our Lord what is not true, faith is vain, and love not pure. But whether or not His countenance was such as occurs to us in thinking of Him, we are completely ignorant."*

The Gnostics, it is well known, had portraits of our Saviour, professing to be copies of the likeness said to have been taken by command of Pontius Pilate. For the Pagan honours which they paid to them, they are reproached by Irenæus.

Epiphanius accuses the women of the Collyridian sect, of offering bread to the Virgin Mary, and declaims vehemently against their idolatrous worship of her: but he says nothing of any images possessed by them. "Let Mary be held in honour," he observes, εν τιμη Μαρια εστω, "but let her not be worshipped."†

Since no likenesses of our Lord were possessed by the orthodox up to the fourth century, it becomes a question of some difficulty, whence they procured the type which was almost universally received in the fifth.

* De Trinitate, lib. viii. cap. 4.

† Epiphanius adv. Hæreses.

Perhaps the best answer to the question, is to be found in the fact, that the early Church preserved traditional descriptions of the persons of our Saviour, St. Peter, and St. Paul. The popular sentiment regarding these being once embodied in painting, nothing remained but to copy and perpetuate it; and the first study may have served as a model to the whole school of Christian art in Rome.

The painting, of which an engraving is here given, is supposed to be the earliest professed portrait of our Lord extant; it was found in a chapel in the cemetery of Callistus, and is considered to belong to the end of the fourth century.

In has been said that the countenance usually given to Christ is copied from that of the Jupiter Tonans of the Vatican Museum: the two agree in majesty and tranquil benevolence; but beyond this, a likeness can scarcely be traced. Nor do the

Gnostic gems furnish the original of the above picture, which we must regard as a conventional representation, invented in the fourth century.

Constantia, the sister of Constantine, is said to have written to Eusebius, bishop of Cesarea, desiring him to procure for her a portrait of our Lord. Eusebius was staggered by the request, and evaded it by inquiring whether she wished a likeness of His human or of His divine nature, neither being within the power of the painter to represent. He has not thought fit to preserve this letter, which is only known from the use made of it at the second council of Nice, where it was read by Gregory from the acts of a preceding council.* Augustine, while he denies the existence of an authentic portrait, mentions pictures of Christ and the Apostles seen on the walls.

The custom of painting the interior of churches with sacred subjects made great progress in the fourth century, when the Council of Elvira had the boldness to condemn it. The prohibition, though distinctly expressed, has not been understood by Romanists in its obvious sense.

"Placuit picturas in Ecclesiâ esse non debere, ne quod colitur aut adoratur in parictibus depingatur." "We decree that there ought not to be pictures in the churches; lest what is worshipped or adored be painted on the walls." The Father Maimbourg attributes this prohibition entirely to the fear lest by damp or Pagan violence any injury should be

* Labbæus, Concilia. t. vii.

inflicted on the sacred figures. Others confine the prohibition to images of the Divine Persons, as they alone were included in the definition, "what is worshipped or adored." But the canon contains its own explanation: it forbids the existence of any pictures whatever in churches, lest objects of too sacred a character should at last be painted on the walls. The Spanish Fathers were therefore opposed to the custom then beginning to prevail in Italy.

Christian painting, as we have seen in the representations of Daniel, the Agape, and the fossor Diogenes, made considerable progress in the chapels of subterranean Rome. The best early description of church painting is given by Paulinus. Surrounded by a mass of illiterate and half-Christianised peasants, who flocked together for the festival of St. Felix, their bishop viewed with distress their ignorance of Scripture history, and the carnal nature of their devotions. Eating, drinking, and midnight riot appeared to constitute their service; and to remedy this state of things, Paulinus caused the the inside of his church to be painted with Scripture subjects, which might both instruct the people, and rival the attractions of the wine cup. "While examining the pictures," he argued, "they may forget the feast; and painting may beguile hunger. The gazer drinks in sobriety, wine is forgotten: and as they look away the day, the cups grow fewer in number, since less time remains for feasting." *

* Paulini Poema xxiv.

These sanguine expectations, there is reason to fear, were not fulfilled.

The subjects of those paintings were mostly chosen from the Old Testament: Ruth; Isaac; Jacob and Joseph; Joshua at the passage of the Jordan; Moses at the Red Sea. Upon these Paulinus himself would meditate, and embody his reflections in his poems: as he lingered in the twilight before the fading scenes, such thoughts as these passed through his mind:

" Sim profugus mundi, tanquam benedictus Iacob
Fratris Edom fugitivus erat, fessoque sacrandum
Supponam çapiti lapidem, Christoque quiescam.
Sit mihi castus amor, sit et horror amoris iniqui,
Carnis et illicebras velut inviolatus Joseph
Effugiam, vinclis exuto corpore, liber
Criminis, et spolium mundi carnale relinquam.
Tempus enim longè fieri complexibus: instat
Summa dies: prope jam Dominus; jam surgere somno
Tempus, et ad Domini pulsum vigilare paratos."

Like blest Jacob may I live,
From the world a fugitive:
Find a Rock beside my bed,
Where may rest my weary head:
Grant me to repose on Thee,
Christ, to all eternity.

May I live like Joseph pure;
Let no snares my heart allure:
But immaculate as he,
Let me from temptation flee;
Linger not to count the cost,
Though my all on earth be lost.

Let me each short hour redeem
From death's slumber; lest my dream

End but with salvation's day,
All too late to watch and pray.
Lest the Lord, a friend no more,
Knock in judgment at the door.

This passage is among the earliest Christian poetry that may strictly be called devotional. His reflection on the picture of Isaac's sacrifice contains an idea often since repeated:

"Hostia viva Deo tanquam puer offerar Isaac
Et mea ligna gerens, sequar almum sub cruce patrem."

May I, like Isaac, be offered to God a living sacrifice: and bearing my own wood, in the form of a cross, follow my Divine Father.*

Notwithstanding the attempts made by the Church of Rome to trace back the worship of the Virgin Mary to the earliest times, it is a fact notorious to every one conversant with ecclesiastical history, that the Mother of our Lord was scarcely noticed in writings, paintings, or sculptures, till late in the fourth century. An equivocal passage of Irenæus, describing her as the advocate of Eve, is the principal exception.

The silence of the heathen regarding the worship of the Virgin, is a strong argument against its existence. Her name was well known to them, and they readily adopted the calumnies invented

* Paulinus was applied to, by his brother, for an inscription to be placed beneath a painting displaying St. Martin and himself: he furnished the following:

"Hunc peccatores, illum spectate beatî
Exemplar sanctis ille est, iste reis."

Look here, sinners; saints, look on that: in each see your own type.

by the Jews to blacken her character. Yet with all their abuse of the Christians for worshipping Christ, a man, no accusation of worship paid to His Mother is to be found. The impossibility of such an omission on the part of the Pagans, will be more evident when we have examined their minute descriptions of monasticism, and of the adoration paid to martyr-relics.

In the earliest pictures, the Virgin appears merely as an accessory to the Divine Infant, whom she holds in her arms, or watches in His cradle. She is almost always veiled; and art was limited in its flight, to the expression of as much grace and modesty as could be concentrated in a figure entirely covered. Very few sculptures or paintings of this description were executed before the Council of Ephesus, in 431, and perhaps not a single one before the year 300.

The conventional type thus timidly developed, aimed only at personifying the virtues that adorned the character of the Virgin Mary; "that the face should be the image of her mind, the model of uprightness," as Ambrose expresses it.

The extent to which the worship of the Virgin Mary has been carried, especially during the later middle ages, is at the present day almost inconceivable. To help in some measure to account for it, though by no means to furnish any palliation for the stupendous impiety, we must recollect the miserable change that had then passed upon the spirit of Christendom, and the virtual exclusion of

every thing gentle, amiable, and attractive from its creed. Rival factions and sects were employed in levelling curses and excommunications against one another: hell, invoked on all sides, seemed to have risen to earth, and to have displaced whatever of heaven had descended to bless mankind. The social relations had been depreciated by the votaries of asceticism, till all that was honourable and respectable in daily life was branded with contempt: the sacrament of love and communion was withdrawn to an awe-inspiring distance, and half its rites withheld from the ordinary worshipper. The weaker sex, with the exception of that portion of it which obtained distinction by embracing celibacy, suffered most by the change. Woman was treated as a being of inferior holiness, — unfit to touch with the hand the sacramental emblem of the Saviour's body: for the Council of Auxerre decreed that females should receive the sacrament with the hand covered with a linen cloth.* A system so hard and repulsive needed some softer element, some niche in its temple assigned to the gentler virtues, already fast disappearing from the face of society. In vain was the remedy sought for in any branch of theology : that science, monopolised by the schoolmen, and rendered more and more abtruse by their labours, was quite removed from the comprehension of the vulgar. In the worship

* The decrees of some obscure mediæval councils are no less disgusting for their indecency than insulting to the female sex. See Harduin's Councils, index, sub vocibus *mulier* and *femina*.

of the Virgin, the missing element seemed to be supplied: her gospel, preached in silver tones, fell with strange and sweet effect upon ears that had listened to no voice from heaven but the thunder: a new religion was introduced, containing boundless promises without terrors, sentiments without duties, and an object of adoration that would injure none, while her power to aid was all but infinite. In proportion as the feelings of mankind had been outraged under the iron creed, did they hail with enthusiasm this, which seemed all golden, and fertile only in blessings. It was therefore an unnecessary act of blasphemy on the part of the Constantinopolitan Council to decree, "that whoever would not avail himself of the intercession of the Virgin Mary, should be accursed;"* and quite out of character with the worship of one who was represented as indulgent beyond all precedent. The homage in which she was made to delight, was of a gentler character: "May God Almighty forgive your sins, for the merits of our Lady," was the absolution given by Gregory VII. to Beatrice and Matilda.† Nor has this error disappeared with the dark ages which produced it, if indeed the dark ages can in any sense be said to have passed away in Southern Europe: for still, in despite of Scripture, and of the unanimous consent of the ancient Church, does the Virgin Mary usurp

* A.D. 712. Harduin. iv. 430. The acts were read in the second Nicene Council.

† Gregorii VII. Epistolæ. Harduin, tom. vi. 1235.

or at least share the place of her Son, in the devotions both of priests and of people.

The rudiments of Christian architecture are derived from two distinct sources; the ancient Roman basilica, and the subterranean Catacomb chapel. That the first of these may have furnished in some degree the elements of the second, is possible; though in times of persecution the Church would feel little disposed to borrow the form of its sacred enclosures from the structure of heathen courts. The difficulty of deciding upon the question, lies in our not possessing accurate dates of those specimens of subterranean architecture that are either extant, or known by means of paintings and bas-reliefs.

Notwithstanding the assertions of Roman antiquarians concerning the high antiquity of the Catacomb chapels, as proved by the martyrs' graves contained in them, this argument will not bear the slightest examination; for the bones of martyrs were in after-times removed from their first resting-places, and deposited in altar-graves near the walls of subterranean chapels. These new sepulchres were covered by *horizontal* tablets, and correspond exactly with the martyr-graves described by Prudentius. According to that author, the body of St. Vincent was washed on shore, and interred on the spot by the faithful: in time of peace it was removed to a chapel, and buried beneath the altar. It is therefore impossi-

ble, from the presence of St. Vincent's grave, to ascertain the time at which the chapel bearing his name was built.

The supposition that some relic was necessary in order to the consecration of a church, arose in the fourth century, and became so general, that a law was made, in 386, to forbid the traffic in sacred remains: "Let no one remove a buried body: let no one carry away or sell a martyr: but liberty is granted to enlarge any building already existing under the name of a Martyrium. Given the fourth Kalends of March, at Constantinople."* Augustine particularises the monks as foremost in this traffic: "Some," he says, "retail the limbs of martyrs, if martyrs they are."† Like stock that had risen in value, the remains, so long neglected, now conferred unexpected wealth, or at least honour, on their possessors: the relics of a slave became a present worthy of a king. The Empress Constantina applied to Gregory I. for some portion of St. Paul, even the head, if it could be spared. This was asking too much: Gregory neither dared to touch the relics, on account of the dreadful accidents that had happened to persons going too near them; nor could he honestly advise her to receive so dangerous a gift. Even the tomb of St. Laurence had proved fatal to some workmen, who had accidentally opened it during an excavation: for although none touched the contents, all

* Codex Theodos. lib. ix. titulus xvii.

† De Opere Monachorum, cap. 23.

who looked in, died within ten days.* But the Empress, neither satisfied with the denial, nor alarmed by the probable consequences of the bishop's compliance with her request, pleads the Greek custom of transporting relics. To this Gregory replies by relating an incident which had recently occurred in Rome: some Greek monks, who had been caught in the act of opening graves near St. Paul's Basilica during the night, when questioned as to their motive, confessed that they intended to carry the bones to Greece, and there palm them off as sacred. "From which circumstance," argues Gregory, "I suspect that the Greeks do not *really* transport sacred relics."†

In the confusion thus created, it is impossible to ascertain the original burial places of the martyrs, excepting of a few that were never removed, but had churches raised over their graves at the earliest moment practicable.

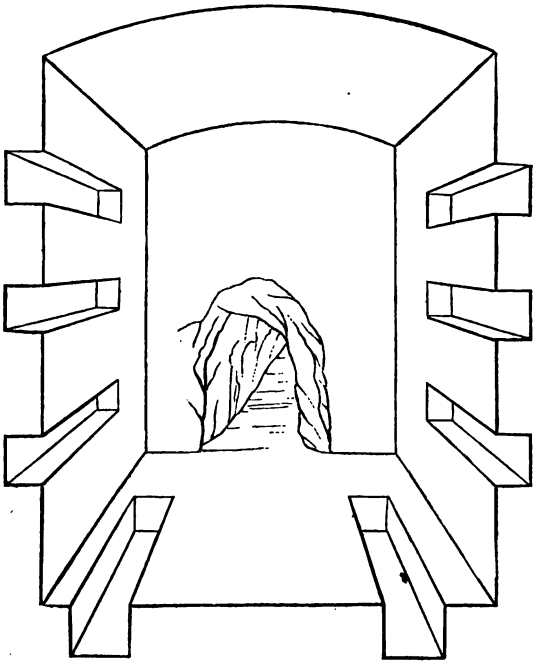
It is impossible to trace to any one source the origin of Christian architecture; for while the lateral chapels of a cathedral, its confessions, crypts, and altar, are derived from the Catacombs; the windows, aisles, nave, and transept are indisputably taken from the ancient court of justice.

* Some cases of this kind will be found in Chadwick's Supplement to the Parliamentary Report upon Interment.

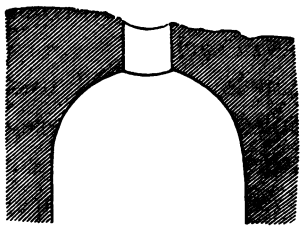
† Gregorii Maximi Epist. lib. iv. ep. xxx. The second Council of Nice considered relics absolutely essential to the sanctity of a church, and ordered that all churches unprovided with them should be immediately supplied.

A short account of the two structures will vindicate the claims of each.

The first chapels excavated in the catacombs, were of the simplest form,—a mere enlargement of the passage into an oblong or square chamber, vaulted above for the convenience of supporting the roof, and lined with graves on every side. One is here seen in section, having also tombs sunk in the floor.

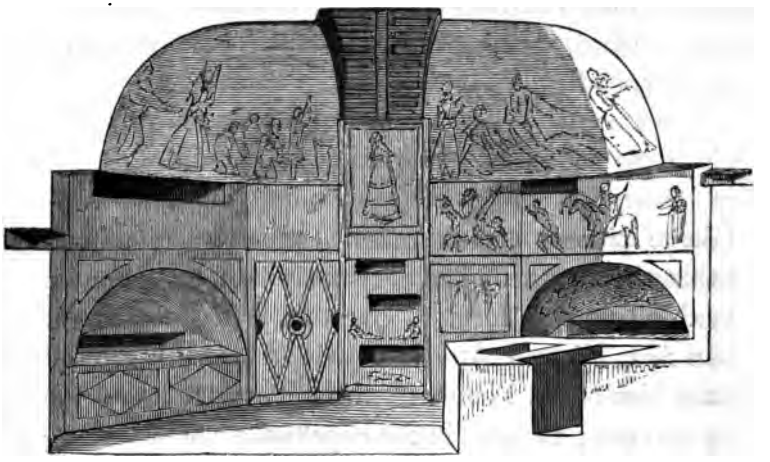


The narrow passage of the gallery is opposite the spectator. A more elevated vault was afterwards preferred, and a light-hole practised in times of security. Although the ceiling thus produced seems to furnish the original idea of a



dome pierced at its summit, we must remember that the Pantheon had previously been constructed, exhibiting the form in question, fully developed. In fact, Michael Angelo is said to have borrowed the idea of St. Peter's from the Parthenon and the Pantheon; to have, in the hopelessness of producing a new element of architectural grandeur, determined to place the one upon the other, and combine the beauties of both.

The bishops of Rome were not unmindful of their early sanctuary, when released from the necessity of seeking refuge in it. Their subterranean decorations have been noticed by Anastasius; and some are mentioned in the poems of Prudentius. Celestinus, who lived in 421, embellished his own cemetery with paintings; Fabian, sitting in 251, constructed many fresh buildings in the cemeteries: the tomb of Hippolytus had been adorned with Parian marble and precious metals before the year 400. Our next specimen of the Catacomb chapel is therefore considerably in advance of the last; the roof being more vaulted and ornamented, the walls painted, and the *monumentum arcuatum*, an important feature in church architecture, freely introduced.



This "arched monument," as it is technically termed, consists of a vaulted niche, containing a flat tomb projecting from the back wall: in some instances the roof is covered with painting. In subterranean chapels, it is not uncommon to find a tomb occupying part of the space originally covered by a fresco, in such a manner as to show that the grave is of later date than the picture. Occasionally these graves are accompanied by the cup, supposed to commemorate a martyr's death; and these cases have been adduced as proofs of the existence of church painting previous to the time of Constantine. But the uncertainty regarding the symbols of martyrdom, as well as the practice of secondary interment, destroy the value of the proof.

The projecting table formed by the lower part of the arched monument, and the horizontal grave exposed by the section on the right of the above

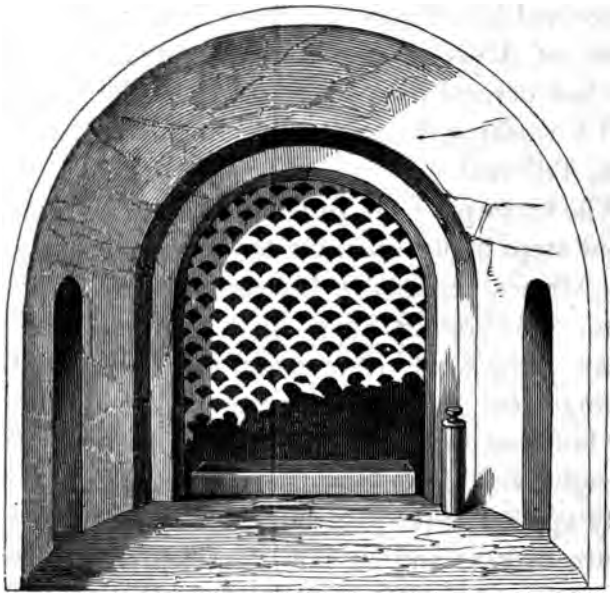
sketch, offer facilities for the celebration of martyr-feasts, which remove any difficulty occasioned by the perpendicular slabs of earlier times.

If we can suppose a chapel, like that represented above, to have been brought to its actual state of of decoration under the immediate successors of Constantine, it must be granted that the horizontal martyr-graves may have served as a scene of mutual exhortation in the persecutions under Julian and the Arian Emperors: that the faithful may have been strengthened in their arduous struggle, by the sacramental emblems, actually partaken of upon the grave-stone. But as a matter of history, this later recourse to the martyr-chapels is very different from the same expedient resorted to by the primitive confessors, objects of the Decian and Aurelian proscriptions; when the episcopal chair of Rome, not, as now, the throne of a temporal prince, was but one remove from a martyr's crown.

The vaulted monument of the last chapel, though a great refinement upon the simple niche, was but the embryo of the fully developed *confession* of the next age. In the cancellarium here engraved, may be traced the elements of the modern chancel, balustrade, and communion table, of our own churches: or the semicircular round-headed tribune,* the barred gates of the crypt, and the altar, of modern Italy. A sarcophagus, containing bones, is seen

* The baldacchino is not here specified, on the supposition that it is only a substitute for the tribune, in situations where the high altar is removed from its natural place.

at the back of the vault, separated from the open space in front by a cancellated slab of marble, now



broken. A cup is placed upon the pedestal on the right.

A short time before the introduction of Christianity, the Imperial palaces of Rome had been provided with courts appropriated to the administration of justice. These basilicæ, as they were termed, increased to the number of eighteen, and were afterwards devoted to the transaction of general business. Their interior displayed a central avenue, flanked by two lateral aisles, and terminated by a transept. The male and female candidates for justice filled the aisles, the separation of the sexes being preserved by the central

nave.* There was also a semicircular swelling of the transept opposite to the nave, occupied by the judge and his officers: to this recess was given the name of Absis, in Greek, and Tribuna, in Latin; the last derived from the ancient office of Tribune, and furnishing the original of the modern appellation, Tribunal.

The transept of the Imperial Basilica was raised a few steps higher than the nave; and the seats for magistrates, sometimes disposed in a semicircular form, were rather above both. It requires no great stretch of imagination to trace in this arrangement the outline of a Christian church: the building, originally intended for the protection of right, and the enforcement of justice, was naturally applied to the preaching of eternal truth and righteousness: and its name, Basilica, a kingly hall, was well suited to the temple of the King of kings. "The bishop," observes Hope, "might find in the raised absis his fit seat, called upon, as he was, to *over-see* his flock, and the clergy who were ranged on either side." But what seemed most of all to warrant the appropriation of the building, was the discovery, made at the time, that the transept and nave of the heathen edifice formed a cross, and had through past ages uttered a mute prophecy of the future triumph of the Crucified. It is said that many of the Pagans were profoundly impressed with this coincidence, and disposed thereby to

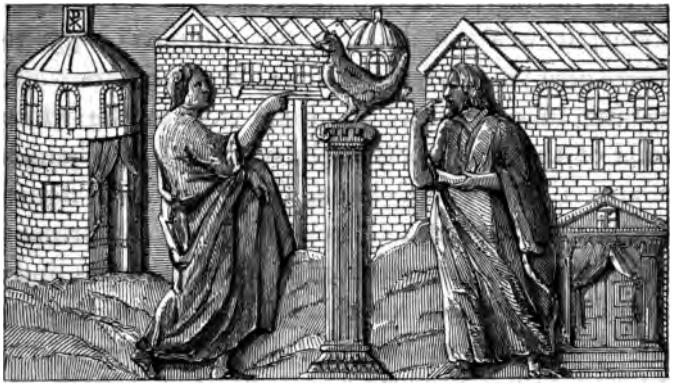
* See on this subject excellent articles in Bunsen's Rome, and in Hope's Essays on Architecture.

receive Christianity. Nor is the fact less probable than that which is related of the Alexandrians, that on the destruction of the Serapion, and revelation of its mysteries, many changed their religion in consequence of finding the cross prominently displayed among the Egyptian symbols: such trifles have weight with superstitious minds.

The building, once devoted to the purposes of Christian worship, left little scope for the talents of its new professors in the way of alteration. To transfer to the absis the hallowed associations of the monumentum arcuatum; to partition off part of the nave for a choir; to roof over the central aisle for the convenience of worshippers, and to erect pulpits in places whence the voice could reach every part of the audience,—taxed but lightly the feeble invention of the fourth century. The entire edifice, somewhat resembling a magnificent barn, bore no manner of similitude to the Pagan temple: bare walls without, in place of columns; a flat wooden roof and regular windows, in the room of an unbroken enclosure favourable to the artifices of divination: these peculiarities must have obviated every objection to the secular origin of the building that the most uncompromising enemies of idolatry could suggest.

We may safely take as a specimen of church architecture belonging to the times of the Catacombs, the basilica sculptured on a sarcophagus, actually discovered in them, and now deposited in the Vatican library.

The date of this curious work is decided by its details. The beardless countenance of our Saviour denotes a time previous to the general adoption of the more aged type; and the basilica, seen in the back-ground, indicates an epoch somewhat later than that of Constantine. In fixing upon the end of the fourth century as the date of this piece of



sculpture, we are acting in accordance with the subject of the foreground — Christ's warning to Peter; an incident in the Apostle's history far from popular in Rome at a later period. The symbolic introduction of the cock on an Ionic pillar placed between the figures, belongs to the hieroglyphic school of design then prevalent: while the gesture of St. Peter, exactly resembling that of a modern Italian peasant, displays an imitation of nature superior to the general state of art at the time.

But what gives to this composition its great antiquarian value, is the representation of a Christian

basilica in a complete form. On the left is seen a detached baptistery surmounted by the monogram: the central building seems to be a repetition of that on the right, so placed as to show, in defiance of perspective, the terminating absis. The entrance door beyond the figure of St. Peter is furnished with vails, a custom of which traces are still preserved in Italy. According to the Council of Narbonne, it was the duty of the inferior clergy to raise these vails for the bishops or presbyters when passing in and out. Paulinus notices the white vails of the doors of his church; and Epiphanius relates the story of his finding a sacred figure drawn upon one at a church door. In the present day, these vails are replaced by hanging mats lined with leather, which materially assist in preserving the equable temperature of Italian churches.*

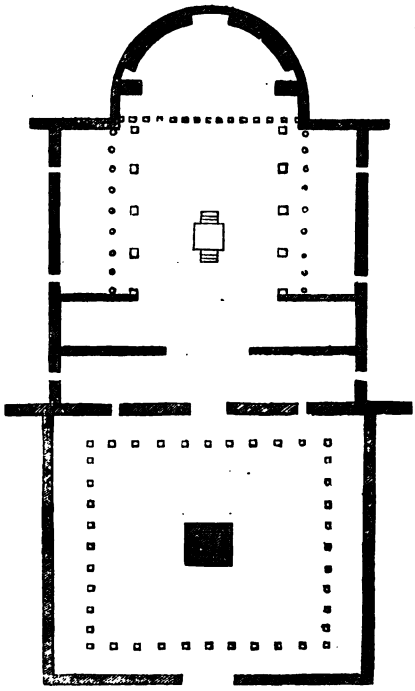
The basilica here appears in the form of a large barn, with sloping roof, gable ends, and blank walls. All the magnificence employed was to be found within: minute tesselation of the pavement, and incrustation of the walls with marbles, were not thought inconsistent with the most homely exterior. By detaching the baptistery from the principal edifice, it was signified that it was necessary to pass through the initiatory rite, before obtaining entrance to the church. The cluster of secondary buildings that gradually encircled the house of

* According to Augustine, vails were used at the entrances to Pagan schools, serving, as he expresses it, to conceal the ignorance that took refuge within.

prayer, with the bells and bell-tower afterwards added, belong to times later than those described in this volume.

A plan of the ancient basilica* is subjoined: it illustrates well the state of church discipline in the latter part of the fourth century.

At the upper end is seen the rounded absis, containing the vestries, altar, and seats for the clergy·



separated from this, by a railing, is the body of the church, intended for the believers, that is, the communicants. Between the outer wall and the prin-

* From Bingham's Antiquities.

cipal row of columns dividing the aisles from the nave, may be seen a second series of small pillars, supporting the women's gallery on either side: in the centre is the pulpit, provided with steps at each end. But besides the faithful, placed above or below according to their sex, there were four other orders of worshippers, to each of which an appropriate situation was assigned. At the entrance of the square court seen below, the eye was met by a fountain, in the midst of an open space, surrounded by a colonnade raised on pillars. In this court, exposed to the sun and rain, were collected the *hyemantes*, the lowest order of penitents, who found in the hardships of a wintry sky, a mild execution of the sentence pronounced on their aggravated crimes. Beneath the portico running round the court were the *flentes*, a less degraded class of penitents, who with tears besought an entrance into the sacred building. Yet farther inwards, in the first of two compartments before the nave, were the *audientes*, or hearers, comprising catechumens and other unbaptized persons: in the second were ranged the *prostratores*, the third rank of penance-doing offenders.*

At one time we find the single pulpit replaced by two, the higher of which was kept for the read-

* The crimes for which the severer kinds of penance were inflicted, would in our country be visited with death, or expatriation for life. The exclusion of such offenders was a public vindication of the morals of the Church, especially in the eyes of the Pagans. "With such an one, no, not to eat," was the apostolic precept, then esteemed literally binding.

ing of the Gospel, and the other for the Epistle. Lights were generally burned in the Eastern churches during the reading of the Gospel, being probably lighted during the exclamation, "Glory be to thee, O God." The custom of standing while the Gospel is read, is the only other part of the ceremony remaining with us. The galleries for women, represented by Bingham, did not always exist. In that case, the sexes were arranged on opposite sides of the building, and even entered by separate doors. The nave, viewed as a whole, was also divided into two principal parts: the Narthex or pronaos, next to the entrance porch; and the aula, or place of the faithful, beyond. These arrangements claim no higher antiquity than the middle of the fourth century.

The origin of Christian poetry, at least of that portion which has come down to our own times, is easily traced. While the devotional feelings of Jewish worshippers continually found expression in verse, the idea of adapting to metrical language the themes of Christian exultation, was not entertained till the latter part of the fourth century. To Prudentius belongs the honour of introducing poetry into the literature of our religion: and if we cannot always approve his selection of subjects, we must confess that he has at times struck into the noblest paths of his art. Whatever may be thought of his genius, his enthusiasm must stand unimpeached. Among the best specimens of his manner is the address to the Innocents, occurring in the Cathemerinon;

"Salvete flores martyrum,
Quos lucis ipso in limine
Christi insecutor sustulit,
Ceu turbo nascentes rosas.
Vos prima Christi victima,
Grex immolatorum tener,
Aram ante ipsam simplices
Palmâ et coronis luditis."

First fruits of martyrs, hail!
Whom in the dawning of life's day
The godless tyrant swept away,
As storms the budding roses.
But now before the altar high
Each tender victim safe reposes,
Pleased, in that dread vicinity,
With branch of palm and crown to play;
Though all unconscious of the prize,
Themselves, Christ's earliest sacrifice.

The first line may have furnished the idea of Heber's Hymn for the Innocents' Day.

"Firstlings of faith! the murderer's knife
Hath missed its deadliest aim:" &c.

As might have been anticipated, the true capabilities of Christian poetry did not at once occur to its first cultivators. They did indeed select a number of subjects from the mass which offered themselves, and by high colouring and exaggeration endeavour to convert them into poetical themes; but even with the Psalms and Prophets before them, they failed to discover that the most practical parts of religion were admirably fitted for their purpose. The whole range of ancient Christian poetry offers nothing resembling in method the

portion of the book of Job beginning with, "Where shall wisdom be found?" nor indeed have later times succeeded in imitating the simple though sublime style of that, perhaps the most finished and complete of inspired poems. We must remember that Christian poetry was called into existence at a time when the human intellect was preparing for the long slumber of the middle ages; when literature was almost extinct, and the very language of the empire debased; and, what was of greater consequence, when the subjects most forcibly brought before religious minds were the praises of martyrdom, and the miraculous powers of relics and saints. In connection with the former of these, there is a passage of Prudentius by no means unworthy of a sacred poet. After describing the Proconsular records of the execution of Romanus, he takes occasion to compare with them the eternal records kept by Christ, commemorative of His servants' sufferings: in these lines he has anticipated the "recording angel" of Sterne:

"Illas sed ætas conficit diutina,
Uligo fuscat, pulvis obducit situ,
Carpit senectus, aut ruinis obruit;
Inscripta Christo pagina immortalis est,
Nec obsolescit ullus in cœlis apex.
Excepit adstans angelus coram Deo,
Et quæ locutus Martyr, et quæ pertulit:
Nec verba solùm disserentis condidit,
Sed ipsa pingens vulnera expressit stilo,
Laterum, genarum, pectorisque, et faucium.
Omnis notata est sanguinis dimensio,

Ut quamque plagam sulcus exaraverit,
Altam, patentem, proximam, longam, brevem,
Quæ vis doloris, quive segmenti modus:
Guttam cruoris ille nullam perdidit."

But these the dust and damp consume,
And Time, in his destroying race,
Shall breathe upon the tragic scroll,
And every mouldering line efface.
There is a record traced on high,
That shall endure eternally;
On whose everlasting page,
Nought grows obsolete by age.
The Angel standing by God's Throne
Treasures there each word and groan;
And not the Martyr's speech alone,
But every wound is there depicted,
With every circumstance of pain,
The crimson stream, the gash inflicted,
And not a drop is shed in vain.

Some of his verses describing the torments of the martyrs, are altogether untranslateable.

"Barbarus tortor latus omne carpsit,
Sanguis impensus, lacerata membra,
Pectus abscisâ patuit papillâ
Corde sub ipso.

* * * *

Cruda te longùm tenuit cicatrix,
Et diu venis dolor hæsit ardens;
Dum putrescentes tenuit medullas
Tabidus humor.

* * * *

Vidimus partem jecoris revulsam,
Ungulis longè jacuisse pressis;
Mors habet pallens aliquid tuorum
Te quoque vivâ."

The next Christian poet in succession is Paulinus, bishop of Nola, almost a contemporary of Pruden-

tius. An equally strange mixture of subjects is found in his writings: at one time he is occupied in describing some trifling decoration of his church; at another, glowing with gratitude for the mercies of redemption. There is a strong resemblance to the general manner of George Herbert, in the lines —

"Ligno mea Vita pependit,
Ut staret mea vita Deo. Quid, Vita, rependam,
Pro vitâ tibi, Christe, meâ? nisi forte salutis
Accipiam calicem quo te mea dextra propinat,
Ut sacro mortis preciosæ proluar haustu.
Sed quid agam? neque si proprium dem corpus in ignem,
Vilescamque mihi, nec sanguine debita fuso
Justa tibi solvam, quia me reddam tibi pro me,
Et quicquid simili vice fecero, semper ero impar,
Christe, tibi."

My Life was slain, that I might live,
My Life did hang upon the tree:
Teach me what recompence to give
For life bestowed, my Life, by thee.
With joy salvation's cup I take, &c.

Similar thoughts occur in prose, in the letter of Paulinus to Severus: "What," he asks, "shall I render to Him for my sorrows borne by Him? What for the blessings conferred by Him upon me? What for my flesh taken upon Himself? What for His buffetings, scoffs, and scourging? What for His cross, death, and burial? Let us then pay love for debt, devotion for price, thanks for money." Possibly Herbert has imitated these passages in his poems entitled the "Thanksgiving," and the "Reprisal."

If we wish to arrive at a fair estimate of the poems of Paulinus, we must not confine ourselves to a few of the best parts, but examine a little the feebler portions. One of these, commemorating a miracle attributed to St. Felix, is as prosaic as any thing in metre can possibly be. The story is this: A poor man, who had put himself under the protection of St. Felix, is robbed of two favourite bullocks, animals which constituted all his wealth, and which he treated like children. He prays vigorously to the saint, through whose carelessness the misfortune has occurred: blames his want of foresight in leaving no trace of their footsteps, or clue to the place of their concealment; and demands them as of a responsible guardian, from whom he is determined to accept no shuffling excuse. He even declines the trouble of searching for his cattle, as a step unworthy of himself and his patron; they must be restored to him on the very spot. The saint still forbears to interfere, and is reproached as a party to the theft; he certainly knows where they are, and yet refuses to produce them.

> "Te teneo; tu scis ubi sunt, qui lumine Christi
> Cuncta et aperta vides, longeque absentia cernis:
> Non tibi celantur."

Still no answer; the suppliant maddened by despair, threatens to die on the spot, to lay down his life on the threshold of the church, and deprive the saint of the opportunity of restoring the bullocks at all.

"Ni properes, isto deponam in limine vitam,
Nec jam comperies cui reddas serò juvencos."

During the night a knocking is heard at the poor man's door: he rises in alarm; but the horns of the beloved animals appearing in the doorway, dispel at once his terror and his grief.

CONCLUSION.

THAT a general change had passed upon the exterior of the Roman Church during its occupation of the Catacombs, is evident from the descriptions left by cotemporary Christian writers. If further proof be wanting, it is easily obtained by comparing with each other the calumnies of Pagans at different epochs, in which we have not only a forcible, though rudely executed, picture of primitive Christianity, but also an argument against the existence of many customs and observances, concerning which an entire silence was maintained by them.

The earliest accusations brought against the Christians were levelled principally at their obstinate adherence to their religion, and refusal to sacrifice to idols. Pliny described them as meeting together to worship Christ, to sing hymns, and to partake of a social meal: their morals were represented as pure, their opinions as simply opposed to the religion of the state. The same objections were urged afresh from time to time, with such additions as the malice of the heathen could invent, principally in relation to the supposed immorality of the Agape. No new accusations are noticed by Tertullian, nor by Minucius Felix, who, in the dialogue entitled "Octavius," has put into the mouth

of a Pagan the following description of them:— "A darkling and light-avoiding race, dumb in public, garrulous in corners, they despise temples and tombs, revile the gods, and ridicule sacred rites; the wretches actually pity the honours of our priests, and, half-naked themselves, scorn the purple. O wonderful folly and incredible presumption! they contemn present torments, while they dread those that are future and uncertain: and while they fear to die after death, they are not afraid of dying immediately. * * * They worship what they deserve" (meaning the cross). "The Jews," he continues, "were an impracticable people enough; yet even they had temples and sacrifices: but these, why have they no altars, temples, and images known to us? why must they always talk in secret, and never come together openly? what object can they have in all this, unless their worship and intercourse is something to be ashamed of, or to be punished?"

Another general stumbling-block to the Pagans was the Divinity of Christ, and the worship offered to Him. One of their taunts on this subject has been preserved by Arnobius: "You worship a man, born, and crucified in a manner proper to vile persons: you contend that he is God, believe him yet living, and address him with daily prayers."* The same objection was urged by Celsus: "After an infamous life, and a most wretched death, you

* Arnobius contrà Gentes, lib. i.

have made a God of him: how much more worthy of that honour ought you to consider Jonah under his gourd, or Daniel coming unharmed out of the den of lions, and others still more wonderful?"*

Not only can we, from these sarcasms cast upon the Christians for their adoration of the Saviour, prove the non-existence of martyr-worship in the days of heathen rule; but, from the after-controversy between the contending parties, we are enabled to date with accuracy the introduction of the new worship of saints and relics. Almost the latest objection to heathen idolatry made by a Christian, is to be found in the writings of Lactantius, early in the fourth century: with very little alteration, it might be addressed to a modern Romanist: "Why do you not raise your eyes to heaven, and, calling upon the names of the gods, offer sacrifices in open space? Why look rather to walls, and wood, and stone, than to that place in which you believe them to dwell? What is the meaning of temples, and of altars; what especially of images, which are either monuments of the dead or of the absent living?"† But the argument, so long and so powerfully wielded against heathenism, was from that time abandoned, and, strange to say, was even turned against Christianity, at least the Christianity of the fourth century.

The worship of saints was first openly attacked by the Emperor Julian: "Instead of many gods,"

* Origen in Celsum, lib. vii.
† De Origine Erroris, lib. ii.

he complained, "the Christians worship, not one man, but many wretched men." Nor does he omit to distinguish between the ancient and novel parts of their system: "At what you have done, adding new dead to your first Dead One, who can express sufficient disgust? You have filled every place with sepulchres and monuments." * This accusation is backed by Libanius, who, in his twenty-fifth oration, describes the Christians as persons "hostile to the gods, worshippers of tombs." Indeed this adoration of martyrs and sepulchral remains now attracted general notice, and was interwoven by historians with their descriptions of earlier events. Ammianus Marcellinus puts these words into the mouth of a Pagan: "These whom you seek to put to death as noxious persons, the Christian religion worships as martyrs." †

The malicious interest exhibited by the Pagans in the externals of Christianity is well exemplified by the invective of Eunapius the Sardian. That writer, the biographer of the sophists and philosophers of his time, flourished soon after the reign of Julian. In describing the demolition of the Serapion at Alexandria, and the introduction of the new worship at Canopus, he tells us that "the Iconoclasts were not able to carry away the foundations and magnificent blocks of marble; but those illustrious and warlike men, having confused and disturbed every thing, boasted that they had made

* Cyrillus adv. Julianum, lib. vi. et x.

† Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. xxvii. cap vii.

war upon the gods with bloodless hands, though pure from the crime of avarice they could not say: thus making a merit of their impiety and sacrilege. They next introduced into the sacred precincts the so-called Monks, men certainly in appearance, but in habits swine; who openly committed enormous and unspeakable crimes; part of whose religion it was to scout all reverence for the sacred place. At that time any one who wore a black dress, or had no objection to being seen publicly in a dirty coat, was invested with absolute authority: to such estimation had risen that class of men, of whom all books of history have made mention. The Monks were also established at Canopus, that they might worship with divine honours certain slaves and scandalous characters, in the place of those gods who are discerned by the understanding. They also compelled men to a form of observances and ceremonies; for they exhibited as sacred the heads, salted and preserved, of those who had been put to death by the judges for the multitude of their crimes. To those they bowed the knee, and received them among their gods; besmearing themselves with dust and filth before their sepulchres. Some of these were styled Martyrs, some Deacons, and others legates and arbiters of prayers and petitions with the gods: while in fact they had been faithless in their slavery, and miserably corrected by scourging: bearing on their bodies the scars of punishment, and the traces of their crimes. Such gods does earth produce." *

* Eunapius, in Vitâ Ædesii.

It would not be difficult to verify nearly the whole of this account, even from the writings of the Fathers most favourable to monasticism. Augustine's description of the monks is not much better: "Some make wide their fringes and phylacteries, while others pretend falsely that they have received news of parents or relations living in such or such a country, and are travelling thither. And all beg, all demand, either the means of supporting their lucrative pauperism, or the reward of their feigned sanctity." *

In Jerome's directions to Rusticus the monk, we find the maxim, "Dirty clothes bespeak a clean mind: a shabby cloak shows a contempt of the world." He also inquires concerning the teaching of Carneades, who was becoming too popular with the ladies of his neighbourhood: "Does he set an example of luxury and the use of the bath, or does he inculcate fasting, modesty, and nastiness (illuviem)?" Jerome to Domnio.† Jerome's complaint was scarcely fair, as he himself relaxed a little in the case of young ladies: "Your clothes," he directs Eustochium, "should be not exactly clean, yet not filthy."

The adoration of saints and martyrs, though not actually occupying so prominent a place in the system of the fourth century, as would appear from the sketch of Eunapius, is noticed with different

* Augustine, de Opere Monachorum, cap. xxviii.

† "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face." — Christ to his disciples, Matthew, vi. 17.

degrees of distinctness by all classes of writers of the time. Augustine feels it necessary to apologise in some manner for its absurdity: "It quite passes the strength of my understanding," he observes, "how the martyrs can help those to whom they certainly do render assistance; whether they are present simultaneously in different places, and those far apart; whether their presence is only to be recognised at their shrines, or every where else." *

The Church of the fourth century, while undergoing this change, did not unanimously acquiesce in the adoption of novelties so repugnant to its original institution. Good men, like Paulinus and Augustine, were at times staggered by the dangerous results of the new doctrines; while others, like Vigilantius, entered an energetic protest against them. The controversy thus produced, degenerated into little more than a personal quarrel between Jerome and his opponents, and no permanent result was effected. Not the least remarkable circumstance connected with it, is the little interest that was taken by the Church in general in such important questions as were raised by Vigilantius; although that presbyter, enjoying the intimate friendship of the most pious and distinguished men of his time, continued to attack the principles which were then entering the Church, even under their auspices.

The little opposition made to him cannot be

* De Curâ pro Mortuis gerendâ, c. xviii.

explained by any superiority of station, for he was born in the remote passes of the Alps, and employed in menial offices in his father's tavern. In such a situation it is surprising that he should obtain any education, or acquire information on ecclesiastical subjects; yet he appeared as a learned and formidable adversary to the impetuous Jerome, who vainly expended his most abusive eloquence upon the "tapster's son."*

To what extent the worship of martyrs was actually carried in the beginning of the fifth century, is not clear: Jerome denied the imputation of it altogether. On these subjects different opinions were held by different persons at the same time, especially as to the orthodoxy of sacred painting. Thus while Paulinus was decorating his church with frescoes of Scripture subjects, to an extent

* The character of Vigilantius has generally been made the sport of party-feeling and misrepresentation. In imitation of Jerome's invectives, the Romanists have spared no pains to vilify him: their arguments were demolished by Bayle, who seems to have written on the subject chiefly for the pleasure of confuting his old opponents. Mosheim naturally took the part of Vigilantius, and supported his opinion by the authority of Bayle. This was sufficient to determine Milner to the opposite side, and to set him against the "man whom Mosheim scruples not to call the good Vigilantius. He quotes," continues Milner, "Bayle's Dictionary, whence I gather that the presbyter before us was agreeable to that self-conceited sceptic." (History of the Church, Century V.) More lately, Mr. Milman and Dr. Gilly have adopted the shortest method of ascertaining the real merits of Vigilantius, by examining the original correspondence regarding him, in which are preserved the few sentences of his works now extant. Perhaps the most amusing account of him is that contained in Basnage's Ecclesiastical History.

which could scarcely be tolerated by a bishop of our own establishment, Epiphanius was manifesting a zeal against pictures, which, however salutary at that critical period, would now be deemed somewhat intolerant. "I found" he says, "fastened to the door of a church at Anablatha, a curtain, on which was the painting of Christ, or some saint, I forget which: seeing then the image of a man exposed to view in the Church of Christ, against the authority of Scripture, I tore the curtain, and advised those who kept that place to wrap in it the body of some poor man for burial."

The degrees of worship and adoration, since defined with fatal precision by the Romish Church, were not then fixed: and the heathen, even less willing than the Christian laity to enter into refinements on the subject, saw no distinction between one form and another. The consequences were disastrous in the extreme: the charge of idolatry mutually urged by the contending parties, lost its force, or rather was effectively employed by the Pagans, after it had become powerless in Christian hands. Thus it was, that although the pure doctrines of our faith speedily displaced the profligate Polytheism of the empire, the after-conflict was long doubtful, being maintained by a religion enfeebled by admixture with foreign elements, against one that had profited by adversity, and had not scrupled to borrow largely from its rival. We read in fable of the struggle between the man and the serpent, in which at length the combatants became transformed into the shapes of each other.

In the last contest between Paganism and Christianity, we find the Sophist contending for the unity of God, and accusing the Christian of undisguised Polytheism ; and on the other side, the Christian insisting on the tutelary powers of glorified mortals, and the omniscience of departed spirits.* Augustine has preserved a remarkable letter, written by Maximus the Madaurian early in the fifth century, attacking the worship of martyrs. "I entreat you," he writes to Augustine, "not to slight what I say, as if it proceeded from dotage, because I am old. The Greeks, in their dubious creed, tell us fabulously, that the mountain Olympus is the habitation of the gods ; but we see and experience, that the forum of our city enjoys the presence of the protecting divinities. The certainty that there is one supreme God, without beginning or natural issue, the great and glorious Father, who is so mad, so besotted, as to deny ? * * * But I cannot dissemble my want of patience concerning this great error: for who can endure that Mygdo (or, as twelve copies read, Myggins,) should be set above Jove that wields the thunder; Sanaë be preferred to Juno, Minerva, Venus, and Vesta: and dreadful to think, that archmartyr Namphanio to all the immortal gods: among whom Lucitas is to be received with equal honour. There are also others, in endless number, with names hateful to

* "Qui lumine Christi
Cuncta et operta vides, longeque absentia cernis."
Paulini Natal. vi.

gods and men, who, in the consciousness of unspeakable atrocities, and adding crime to crime, have, under the semblance of a glorious death, met with an end worthy of a life so stained with guilt. Their tombs, if such a thing is worth mentioning, do fools frequent, neglecting the temples and the ancestral Manes. Thus is fulfilled the prophecy of the indignant poet,

'Rome swears by shadows in the temples of the gods.'" *

Far be it from any one to repeat lightly or causelessly the calumnies cast upon Christ's martyrs by the ungodly of past ages: but neither useless nor trifling is the collection of these accusations, when employed to clear the ancient Church from the charge of idolatry. Up to the year 350, Christians were uniformly accused of worshipping Christ; after that time, of worshipping saints. Can the non-existence of saint-worship in primitive ages be more satisfactorily disproved ?

It has been attempted, in the foregoing pages, to describe with accuracy and honesty some features of the Church of ancient Rome; a church founded by St. Paul, presided over by St. Peter, and numbering in after-times a matchless succession of martyr-bishops. In a day when the Romanist claim to primitive resemblance is half credited by some, who might be forward in furnishing a refutation to the assumption, it must be consolatory to every dutiful son of our Church, to find that

* Augustine, Epist. xvi.

most of the points on which the question of Catholicism turns, require no subtle refinement for their mastery. We may leave to the learned and pious defenders of our establishment the nicer questions of doctrine which properly lie within their province: while they, with the reed furnished by the inspired Word, "measure the temple of God, and them that worship therein," we need but walk through the outer courts of the sanctuary, to see how unlike to all that now occupies the sacred site was the first erection of apostolic hands. The details of one period cannot by any possibility be transferred to the other. To which of the two, it may be confidently asked of the least informed in church history, belongs the bishop who greeted his correspondent, "from Paulinus and Therasia his wife, sinners?" When lived in Rome that Marcus whose parents expressed their belief in his immediate blessedness after death? When was the fear of detection from the smell of wine an inducement with the persecuted laity to defer their morning Eucharist?* When was held that council in Carthage which was opened by the declaration that "none here setteth up himself as bishop of bishops?"† If the voice of truth is to be found in papal decrees, how shall the long-neglected worship of the Virgin be forgiven to the apostolic age?—how the non-preservation of blood and ashes enough to impregnate Christendom with the odour of heavenly

* Cyprian. Epist. 63.

† Concilium Carthag. in Epist. Cypriani.

sanctity? O infantine and undeveloped religion, without mythology, shrines, or images: taught by a priesthood ingloriously moral, unqualified to "create their Creator," and sharing the cup of blessing with the meanest of the laity! And vainly was St. Paul admitted to witness the glories of the third heaven, debarred from their ultimate enjoyment by the decree, "If any one shall say that justifying faith is none other than a trust in the Divine mercy forgiving our sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that trust alone by which we are justified, let him be accursed." *

The assumptions of Rome during the dark ages were, in the general ignorance of literary criticism, greatly supported by the fabrication of fictitious works, professing to be the constitutions and decretals of early popes. This artifice has been so completely exposed by the antiquarian knowledge of the last few centuries, as to unmask the older forgeries, and effectually to prevent the perpetration of new. Accordingly the defence set up by Romanist writers has been in some measure changed: we hear less and less of the consent of antiquity, and more and more of a certain development of Christianity during successive ages. We may hail with pleasure this new apology, as it virtually surrenders the ground long contested between the Reformed and Tridentine churches. Fairly granting that papacy did not exist in the time of the Antonines, our opponents maintain that it inevit-

* Council of Trent, session vi. canon 12.

ably arises out of the episcopacy established by the apostles. But it needs a bold imagination to trace, in the institutions of the first three centuries, the essential elements of purgatory, transubstantiation, relic-worship, and the adoration of the Virgin Mary; or in the scrupulous attachment to the letter of Scripture observable in the early Church, the suppression, however ingeniously contrived, of the second commandment.*

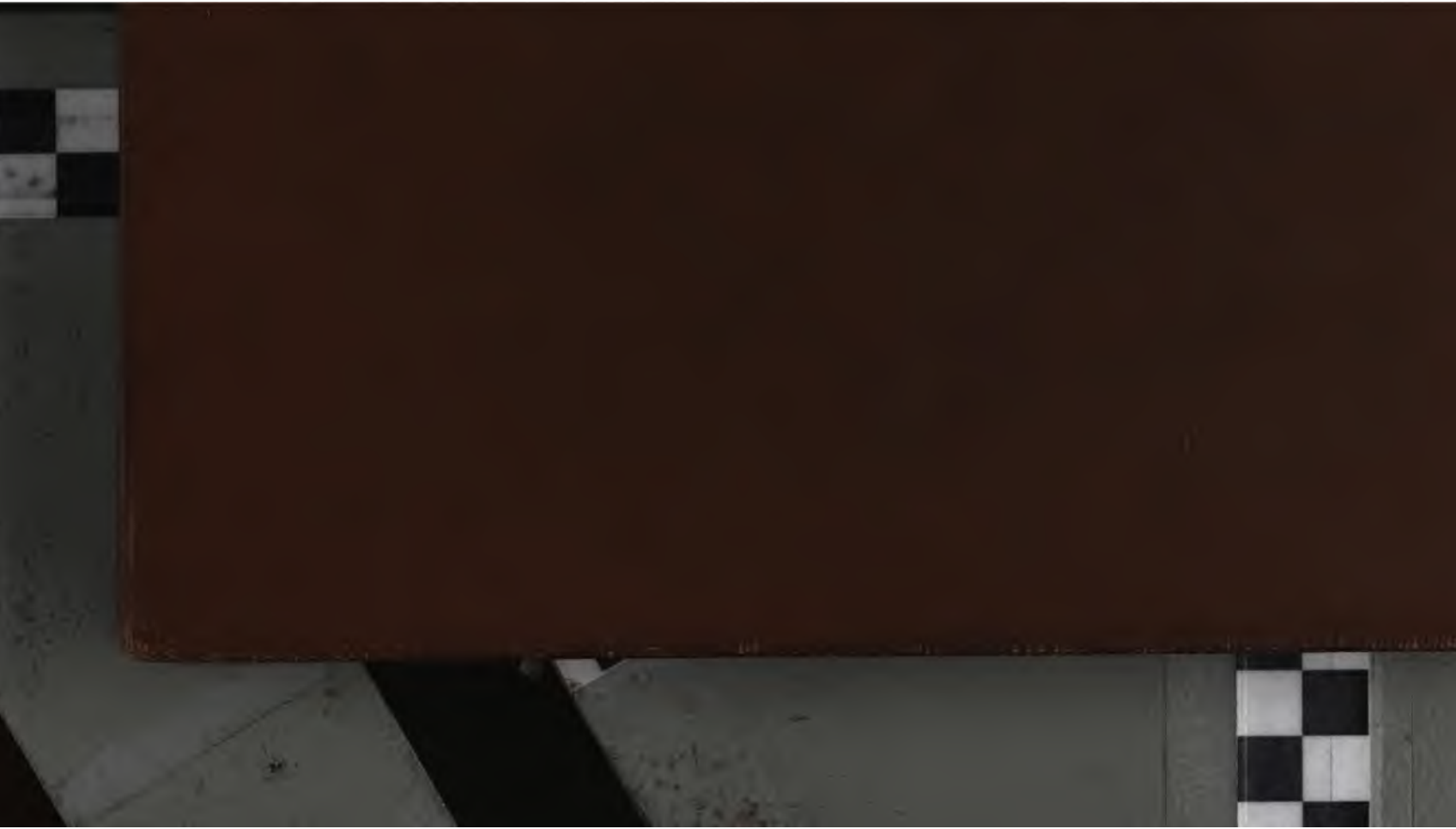
Nor is there in the inspired Word any reference to the future development of new mysteries. St. Paul did indeed notice a certain mystery even then beginning to work, a something to be revealed in its time; but with this the spirit of Romanism professes no affinity. In conforming to that spirit, we are turning our backs upon the ancient churches of Italy, that fought and triumphed in the cause of Christ; and joining with one that has reversed their practice, and deluged with martyr blood our native country; which has cursed our forefathers,

* Among the shifts sometimes resorted to in order to supply the place of the dangerous commandment, the insertion of the second Gospel precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is not the least curious. In a MS. on vellum, in St. George's Library, Windsor, is the following paraphrase of the "Ten Commandments:"

"I. Worship one God, and no more,
And serve Him both with main and might, &c.
II. And let your neighbours, both friend and foe,
Right freely of your friendship feel, &c.
III. In idle God's name take you not,
But weete and save you from that sin, &c."

and retains in full force every anathema against ourselves. We have but to examine the ecclesiastical remains of Rome, to find that its past and present can in no way be identified; that we gain nothing in resemblance to the Church of the Catacombs by a movement towards modern Rome; and that no tendency to apostolic unity is implied in the profession,

> "Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum
> Tendimus in Latium."

To the present church of the seven-hilled city we are indebted for nothing but excommunication and the stake: whereas to ancient Rome we owe the evangelisation of our country, through the zeal of the humble and pious Gregory; whose "acts are," or ought to be, "written in the chronicles of" a grateful nation. In that auspicious hour, when his eye first rested on the captive Angles bound in a Roman slave-market, was planned the most successful missionary enterprise ever undertaken by man: may our Church be enabled in turn to spread the blessing; and having proved its vitality by continuance, may it ever add the yet stronger evidence of life, extension.

THE END.